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NEW LIGHT ON BYRON'S LOVES.

VI. CLAIRE CLAIRMONT:
THE STRUGGLE FOR ALLEGRA.

By GEORGE PASTON.

EARLY in 1817 the Shelleys left Bath, and in March they were established, permanently as they hoped, at Albion House, Marlow. Clare was still with them—she had no other home—but she had resumed her maiden title,¹ and her baby was supposed to be the child of a friend in London. On April 17 Shelley wrote to Byron that he wished to say something about Clare and a little being whom they called Alba, or the Dawn. 'She is very beautiful,' he continues, 'with black hair,² eyes deeply blue and an exquisitely shaped mouth.' He was anxious to know whether Byron had made any plans for the future of the child. While he and Mary would be pleased to take care of it during Byron's absence, gossip was already rife about its parentage, and the best solution of all difficulties would be the father's return to England.

Curiously enough, the letters announcing the baby's birth, which were posted in January, 1817, did not reach Byron till May, when he was in Rome. On May 27 he wrote to inform Mrs. Leigh that he had another daughter. He is puzzled how to dispose of her, but will probably place her in a convent.

'They tell me it is very pretty, with blue eyes and dark hair; and though I never was attracted nor pretended attachment to the mother, still it may be as well to have something to repose a hope upon. I must love something in my old age, and probably circumstances will render this poor little creature a great, and perhaps my only comfort.'

In spite of the scandalmongering of the village about the parentage of the child the summer months passed pleasantly enough. After the long, solitary winter in Bath, it was a joy to be able to receive friends again—the Godwins, the Leigh Hunts, Peacock and Jefferson Hogg. Shelley was working on his poem, *The Revolt of*

¹ She had called herself Mrs. Clairmont before the child's birth.

² The hair afterwards turned golden.

Islam, Mary was finishing her first novel, *Frankenstein*, while Clare gave herself up to the care of her child. Whatever her faults, she was a passionately tender and devoted mother. Though she longed to keep her baby with her, she was convinced that it would be to Alba's advantage if she could be placed at once in her father's charge. If only he would bring her up as his daughter, what a brilliant future awaited the little nameless waif! As we have seen, Byron was attracted by the idea, and in a letter to Kinnaird, dated January 2, 1818, he asks his old friend whether any plan can be devised for sending the year-old baby out to Venice, or placing her in England.

'I shall acknowledge and breed her myself,' he adds, 'giving her the name of Biron (to distinguish her from little Legitimacy) and I mean to christen her Allegra, which is a Venetian name.'

In this collection there are no letters from Clare to Byron for the year 1817. We know (from Shelley) that she wrote occasionally, but it is not likely that she received any encouragement to keep up a regular correspondence. On January 12, 1818, however, the young mother—she was not yet twenty—wrote a long letter—far too long for his taste—to the man she still addressed as 'My dearest Friend.'

'This is my little darling's first birthday,' she begins. 'How much do I wish you could see her; she is just now so very interesting. I do not say that she is a pretty child,¹ though she is certainly very far from ugly, but she has good points—pretty eyes of a deep day-time blue, rosy projecting lips and a little square chin divided in the middle like your own. In the little bit of silver paper you will find a lock of her pretty hair; you will see the colour, but you cannot see the curls on her head which make the back of it look quite divine. Her nose is bad, her cheeks also, and her figure very much that of a boy's. She can neither speak nor walk, but whenever she dislikes anything she calls out upon "Papa." The violence of her disposition is discouraging, but yet it is so mixed up with affection and vivacity I scarcely know whether to laugh or cry.

'My dear friend, how I envy you! You will have a little darling to crawl to your knees and pull you till you take her up; then she will sit in the crook of your arm and you will give her a raisin off your own plate and a tiny drop of wine from your own glass, and she will think herself a little Queen of Creation. But there is one delight above all this; if it please you, you may delight yourself

¹ Clare was evidently trying very hard to be impartial, and not to raise Byron's expectations too high. But she must have known that Shelley thought her child beautiful.

in contemplating a creature growing under your hands; you may look at her and think: "this is my work!"

'I have observed one thing in you that I like. It is this: let a person depend on you, let them be utterly weak and defenceless, having no protector but yourself, and you infallibly grow fond of that person. How kind and gentle you are to children! how good-tempered and considerate towards your servants, how accommodating even to your dogs! And all this because you are sole master and lord; because there is no disputing your power, you become merciful and just. But let someone more on a par with yourself enter the room, you begin to suspect and be cautious, and are very often cruel.

'Perhaps you have been astonished that you have not seen your little girl arrive before now. But the difficulties of such a plan are innumerable. . . . Besides various and ceaseless misgivings that I entertain of you, suppose that in yielding her to your care, I yield her to neglect and coldness. . . . I so fear she will be unhappy, poor little angel! In your great house, left perhaps to servants, while you are drowning sense and reason in wine, and striving all you can to ruin the natural goodness of your nature, who will there be to watch her? She is peculiarly delicate—her indigestions are frequent. A moment might take her from me—all I hold dear. . . .

Perhaps, she admits, she may have done him wrong in suspecting him of unkindness or neglect.

'I well remember,' she continues, 'my own silent, though bitter heart-burnings, when you would often, half in jest, accuse me of thoughts and actions which I detested. I cannot pardon those who attribute to me rude and indelicate feelings; or who believe, because I have unloosed myself from the trammels of custom or opinion, that I do not possess within a severer monitor than either of these. I have loved, it is true, but what then? Have you suffered through me and my love? Find me some other human being who has borne unkindness and injustice with the patience and gentleness I have. I have a child, and show me a more attentive, fond mother. . . .

'This long tirade, as you will call it, has been drawn from me by my hearing repeated some expressions of yours concerning me which mark an utter want of discrimination in you if you really thought as you spoke, which I do not believe. Though I have praised myself I am not vain in that—how should I be otherwise, living in the company I do. Indeed I ought to be better. Alone, I study *Plutarch's Lives*, wherein I find nothing but incitements to virtue and abstinence. With Mary and Shelley the scene changes,

but from the contemplation of the virtues of the dead to those of the living. I have no Hobhouse by my side to dispirit me with an easy impudent declaration of the villainy of all mankind, which I construe into nothing but an attempt to cover his conscious unworthiness. I must be the veriest wretch if I were wicked, placed in a situation as I am. I have faults—I am timid from vanity; my temper is inconstant and *volage*—I want dignity; I do not, like our Mary, sail my steady course like a ship under a gentle and favourable wind. But at thirty I shall be better, and every year I hope to gain in value.

‘What news shall I tell you? Mary has just published her first book—a novel called *Frankenstein*, or *The Modern Prometheus*. It is a most wonderful performance, full of genius, and the fiction is of so continued and extraordinary a kind as no one would imagine could have been written by so young a person. I am delighted, and whatever private feelings of envy I may have at not being able to do so well myself, yet all yields when I consider that she is a woman and will prove in time an ornament to us and an argument in our favour. How I delight in a lovely woman of strong and cultivated intellect; how I delight to hear all the intricacies of life and argument, hanging on her lips. If she were my mortal enemy, if she had even injured my darling, I would serve her with fidelity and fervently advocate her as doing good to the whole. When I read of Epicharsis the slave in Tacitus and of Hypatia in Gibbon, I shriek with joy and cry, “Vittoria! Vittoria!” I cannot bear that women should be outdone in virtue and knowledge by men.’

The Marlow house had proved too cold and damp for the winter and Shelley’s health had suffered. When he was advised to seek rest and change, his eyes turned longingly towards the blue skies and hot sun of Italy. A journey thither might restore his health, and certainly would solve the problem of bringing Allegra and her father together. Mary was doubtful about the plan on the score of expense, but the sale of Albion House eased that difficulty, and on March 11, 1818, the party set out for Milan, where they hoped to meet Byron. But Byron did not come. He sent a messenger for his daughter, and expressed his determination never to see or correspond with Clare, who, he insisted, should give up all claim to her child. This decision fell like a bombshell upon Clare and her companions. Shelley sent a letter of remonstrance, pointing out that Byron’s conduct, however he might justify it to himself, must bear the aspect of great cruelty. For April 21 there is a smudged and blotted letter from Clare to Byron—blotted, surely, with her tears.

'MY DEAR FRIEND,—

'Your messenger will remain here at my request until I hear from you again. I cannot send my child under the impression produced by your letter of the 17th to Shelley, and the messenger has been told that her health, which is not perfectly good, makes it necessary that we should write and hear again from you before she can depart. Pardon me, but I cannot part with my child never to see her again. Only write me one word of consolation. Tell me that you will come and see Shelley in the summer, or that I may be somewhere near her—say this, and I will send her instantly. I cannot describe to you the anguish with which I bring myself to contradict your expectations, or in any manner to oppose your will, but on this point I am firm. If you will not regard me as her mother, she shall never be divided from me.

'I had hoped that your intimacy with Shelley would have stood instead of all these conditions which it is so painful to urge. But you say you will not visit him while I am there. I do not wish to tease you with my presence if I might only see my child. Yet, my dear friend, why should my presence tease you? Why might not the father and mother of a child whom both so tenderly love meet as friends? I cannot think it your intention to let her grow up without knowing her mother. I entreat you to write and say this is not the case. Do not take this as a menace or condition imposed on you, but pity the anxiety of a mother whose child is her only good. Only set my mind at ease on this point and I hope I shall never again have to annoy you as I fear this does. My God! if you did but know what happiness you would confer in visiting Shelley this summer and letting me see my child. But do what you please with regard to everything else, but indeed I cannot part on the terms you intimate in your letter to Shelley. . . .

'One thing more. Remember, my dearest friend, my life as it were, lies with you. Remember what you felt at my age, and think if it is not a lamentable sight to see one human creature beg from another a little mercy and forbearance. You must know that you have all the power in your hands—I entreat you to spare me. Whatever you do, I still pray for your happiness and health. Whatever my fate, may yours be still as great and glorious as it has ever been.

'CLARE.'

Hardly had this letter been despatched than Shelley made the acquaintance of a Venetian gentleman at the post office, and from him heard a most lurid account of Byron's way of life at Venice, where he associated with women of the lowest class, Margarita Coigny, known as the 'Fornarina,' being presently installed as chief

favourite. After this report Shelley strongly urged Clare not to give up her child as he thought she might lose it for ever. Some sort of reassurance she must have received from Byron, and her eyes were still dazzled by the prospect of a brilliant future, for on April 28 Allegra was sent to Venice under the care of Mary's Swiss nurse, Elise Foggi.

'By the time you have this,' wrote Clare on the 27th, 'you will also have my little girl. My dearest friend, for so you must ever be to me, I entreat you to write us a line on her safe arrival—to let me know that she is well. When you have once seen her you will soon guess how I feel in quitting her. . . . I pray you remember what you have writ that I shall see her soon again. I do not know what you mean by saying that my letters are bad German novels—they may well be bad, and it is my daily fear that they may become worse. To-morrow is my birthday,¹ and you may think how I feel. I entreat you, pray spare me all you can. I own I have asked of you too much.

'I have sent you my child because I love her too well to keep her. With you who are powerful and noble and the admiration of the world she will be happy, but I am a miserable and neglected dependant. Dearest and best, I entreat you to think how wretched and alone I feel now that she is gone, and write to me that she is well, the darling bird! . . .

'If I have been faulty, I have suffered enough to redeem my error. My child was borne in sorrow and after much suffering. When I love her with a passion that almost destroys my being, she goes from me. . . . Farewell, I pray for your happiness and for hers. I assure you I have wept so much to-night that my eyes seem to drop hot and burning blood. Remember that I am wretched, and for the smallest word of kindness from you I will bless and honour you.'

As soon as Allegra had departed, the Shelleys, accompanied by Clare, moved to Pisa and thence on to Leghorn, where some old friends of Godwin's, the Gisbornes, were then living. Clare, who was beginning to worry about Allegra, because she could not decipher Elise's letters, wrote to Byron on May 20:

'How is my Allegra? Is she gay? And has she given you any *knocks*? I sincerely hope she has, and paid you all your unkindness to me in very innocent coin. Whenever I think of the

¹ Her twentieth birthday

little creature I feel myself smile. She is so *funny* and yet so pretty. Upon my word, I think you ought to thank me, and instead of calling me *stupid*, be astonished at my *cleverness*. . . . You cannot think how unhappy I have been, but I am now better. I know you will let me see my *chick* again, and I can only hope when you see how *good* I am that you will be kinder to one who can never forget you. . . . We read *Beppo*¹ before we left London. Peacock laughed dreadfully about "his place is no sinecure as you may guess," and the carrying the fan and tippet. Also about *bustling Botherly*—you naughty creature! At first it was said to be written by Frere, but in two days it was known to be yours.²

'I begin to feel uneasy to hear again of my darling. I am very proud of her, and I wish to know whether you think her pretty, and particularly her eyes; she has some looks very like yours. If anything is taken from her, the surprise and astonishment she expresses at such extreme audacity is yourself all over. I asked you to give me a little of your hair. . . .³ Now do, *dearest and most amiable of Bashaws*, send me a little; if you do, I will turn Turk to please you, and forget reading and writing and every other Christian accomplishment. Good God! If anybody could see how double I am getting with bending lowly to entreat the slightest favour of you. . . .

'I heard of your extreme charity to the poor of Venice which was lauded by everyone. I hope that you will be indulgent to me, and I assure you it shall be my study to trouble you as little as I can. Shelley and Mary desire their kindest remembrances to you and a kiss to Allegra.'

Byron seems, at first, to have been pleased with his baby daughter—though he professed to abominate all children—and he was evidently proud of the admiration she excited. On August 3 he wrote to Mrs. Leigh:

'My little girl, Allegra (the child I spoke to you of), has been with me these three months. She is very pretty, and a great

¹ Byron published *Beppo*, a poem in the same style as Frere's *Whistlecraft* in 1818. It is a brief satire on the *cavaliere servente*. The line that amused Peacock is followed by

'Coach, servant, gondola, he goes to call
And carries fan and tippet, gloves and shawl.'

² 'Bustling Botherly' was William Sotheby, now forgotten, but a well-known man of letters in his day. Byron thought that Sotheby had sent him an anonymous letter.

³ Clare had asked for some of his hair to mix with Allegra's in a locket. Considering the attitude that Byron had taken up towards the mother of his child, this request was a proof—and there were many—of poor Clare's want of tact—the quality which Byron placed above all others.

favourite with everybody; but, what is remarkable, much more like Lady Byron than her mother—so much so as to stupefy the learned Fletcher and astonish me. . . . She has very blue eyes, and that singular forehead, fair curly hair, and a devil of a spirit—but that is Papa's.'

By this time Mrs. Hoppner, the charming Swiss wife of the English Consul-General at Venice,¹ had taken pity on the child, and, with Byron's consent, had removed her to her own nursery. Still, all was not well; and the letters from Elise so alarmed Clare that she insisted on rushing off to Venice to see how matters really stood, and Shelley was obliged to act as her escort. The two were very kindly received by Mrs. Hoppner, and presently 'little Ba' made her appearance, 'so grown that you would hardly know her; she is pale and has lost a good deal of her liveliness, but is as beautiful as ever, and I thought more mild.'² Later, Shelley visited Byron who appeared delighted to see him, and discussed quite good-humouredly Clare's request that she might see her child. In the end he offered to lend the Shelleys, for a few weeks, a villa that he had taken at Este. Here Allegra would be allowed to join her mother. The offer was joyfully accepted, and Shelley sent for Mary who, with her two children, set out at once for Este. Little Clara had been ailing, and the long hot journey brought on such a serious attack of illness that she was taken for medical advice to Venice, where she died only an hour or two after her arrival.

This disaster must have cast a gloom over the visit to Este, but Mary called all her father's philosophy to her aid, and bore up bravely.³ Shelley occupied himself in writing *Julian and Maddalo*,⁴ in which the well-known lines on Allegra appear:

'A lovelier toy sweet nature never made,
A serious, subtle, wise yet gentle being.
Graceful without design and unforseeing,
With eyes—oh speak not of her eyes—which seem
Twin mirrors of Italian Heavens, yet gleam
With such deep meaning as we never see
But in the human countenance. . . .'

¹ This Hoppner was a son of the portrait-painter.

² From a letter from Shelley to Mary.

³ Godwin, in writing to condole with her, said: 'You should recollect that it is only persons of a very ordinary sort, and of a pusillanimous disposition that sink long under a calamity of this nature. We seldom indulge long in depression and mourning except when we think secretly that there is something very refined in it, and that it does us honour.'

⁴ The principal characters were drawn from Byron and himself.

With the approach of autumn the villa had to be given up, Allegra was returned to her father, and the Shelley party straggled slowly and rather uncomfortably down through Italy to Florence, Rome and Naples, and then back again to Rome in the spring of 1820. But disquieting news came from Venice. The air did not suit Allegra, who, according to Mrs. Hoppner, '*est devenue tranquille et sérieuse, comme une petite vieille, ce qui nous peine beaucoup. . .*' A rich lady, a Mrs. Vavasour, had offered to adopt the child, but Byron had, as yet, come to no decision.¹

On May 15 Claire² wrote to Byron that she had heard of Mrs. Vavasour's offer.

'I have said nothing definitively because I know what a very unnatural thing you would think it, that I should interfere with my own child.' . . .

She begs him not to come to any hasty decision.

'Do you think, my dear Lord Byron, that you will always live with that Fornara? Don't you think that some day you will get steady and live so that Allegra may be with you and both be happy and make you happy? It is impossible that you can live as you do now; therefore, before you do anything decided, think, and do not throw away the greatest pleasure you have to strangers.

'I firmly believed that I should be at Venice this spring—but I never have what I wish. I think it is quite certain I shall not come. I daresay you rejoice that I shall not see my child because you will then know that there is one person in the world more miserable than yourself.

'Of both Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner I can never say enough. Their kindness came just in time to save both me and Allegra from drowning; for I had begun to despair and to think there was nothing else good in the world but ourselves. . . . You promised your picture—I expect it every day. Now if Mr. Hayter is still in Venice, be good and kind, and let him paint you very well for me, will you? You know you should do good actions sometimes, that there may be a fine light and shade in your life, like the colouring of Salvator Rosa. I don't offer you mine for I think it is very likely you would put it on the fire, and I am all on flame as it is. . . .

'I am very unhappy over Allegra . . . really I think I shall never see her again. And if Shelley were to die there is nothing left for us but dying too. All the good you can do for me is not to

¹ In a later letter to Mary, Mrs. Hoppner said it seemed a pity to sacrifice the child to such a father, who was leading *une vie terrible*.

² About this time she began to spell her name with an 'i.'

hate me, but for Allegra everything depends on you. Do not make me mention what you *ought* to do for her, for I know that every word that falls from my mouth is serpents or toads to you, like the wicked sister in the fairy tale. It is not mine, but your fault that they are not pearls and diamonds. Pray think of that child's miserable condition if you were to die,¹ without anyone to take care of her but her mother, who is hated and detested by everybody. . . . People talk of the stabbing of the Italians—the English do worse. . . . I hope that in making my unhappiness you have found your own, but I fear not. How is your health? I always fear that you will die suddenly of a fever, knowing the life you lead! . . .

‘Your affectionate
CLAIRE.

‘I opened the letter to say that we think of being at Pisa this summer—if so perhaps I shall come to Venice. *Bada a voi* in that case. The French nurses used to still their crying charges with “Marlborough’s a’ coming.” If you are not good the Fornara will get hold of my name to frighten you into order.’²

Mrs. Vavasour’s offer was declined, but the Hoppners came forward with a suggestion of a good home for Allegra. They were just starting for a holiday in Switzerland, and they enquired if Byron would like them to place the child in a Swiss household where she would be brought up as one of the family and at less expense. Byron seemed to have been attracted by this offer, and when it was renewed later on, he wrote:

‘I am very much pleased with what you say of Switzerland, and will ponder upon it. I would rather she married there than here for that matter. For fortune I shall make all that I can spare (if I live and she is correct in her conduct), and if I die before she is settled, I have left her by will £5,000, which is a fair provision out of England for a natural child. I shall increase it all I can if circumstances permit me. . . .’

Meanwhile the Shelleys stayed on too late into the unhealthy Roman spring. Their little boy, William, fell ill of some gastric trouble, and died on June 7. This time the unhappy mother failed

¹ Byron had not told her that he had made any provision for Allegra.

² One can imagine how Byron must have ground his teeth with rage at Claire’s joking allusions to the ‘Fornara.’

to console herself with the Godwin philosophy, and gave herself up to grief. Claire abandoned her plan of going north to get a glimpse of Allegra; she could not desert Mary who was expecting her confinement in the autumn. After a stay at Leghorn the party went on to Florence where Mary gave birth to another boy, Percy, who was to grow up to be the comfort of her life. Thence they moved to Pisa in January, 1820, and here Shelley hoped they might at last strike roots.

Now began Claire's long-drawn struggle with Byron for a sight of her child. He had followed his new love, the Countess Guiccioli, to Ravenna and had taken Allegra with him. On March 16, 1820, Claire wrote from Pisa:

'It is now almost a year and a half that I have not seen Allegra. It would be quite useless, I suppose, to tell you how many times I have tried to see her and how utterly impossible it has been. My anxiety is now so great, so intolerable, that I count the moments till I see her. I am afraid it is almost impossible for me or S. to fetch her. To Shelley it will be a most serious inconvenience in money should he be obliged to do so. I think it is not asking too much of you to beg you will send her to us at Pisa, where we are comfortably settled. This visit will be of the greatest advantage to her, for I shall take the greatest pains to teach her to read, and also we are going to the Baths of Lucca, a very cool place which may prove of service to her health, as she is delicate.¹

This letter was sent to Mr. Hoppner to forward to Byron. Having received no reply by April 23 Claire felt that she had no resource but to set out to fetch her child.

'You may believe me,' she writes, 'that her being with me this summer is unavoidable; already has her health suffered. The first summer she had a dysentery, at the end of the second an ague: both of these disorders were produced by the unwholesomeness of the air of Venice in Summer. Ravenna is equally objectionable, and nothing must induce me to venture her life a third time; I have always been anxious to avoid troubling you unnecessarily, and to leave you quiet in the possession of the child, but if she be to live at all she must be guarded from the disorders of an Italian climate.

¹ Three days later Byron was writing to Hoppner, 'Allegra is prettier, I think, but as obstinate as a mule, and as ravenous as a vulture; health good to judge of the complexion—temper tolerable, but for vanity and pertinacity. She thinks herself handsome and will do as she pleases.' Allegra was just over three years old.

'This is the view I take of her situation; thinking thus, the objects I have hitherto sought for her, your favour and protection, fall to the ground, and I have now no other desire than to watch her health and provide for its continuance.

'The warm weather has begun and increases with unusual violence, and every day brings more danger to Allegra. I shall set out from Pisa on Wednesday, the 3rd of May, and shall reach Bologna on the 6th; I think it would not be inconvenient to you to send Allegra to meet me at Bologna, as it would be detrimental to Shelley's health to proceed to Ravenna.

'How much you would oblige all of us if you would send Allegra under the care of a trusty female servant to Bologna. The best inn is the Pellegrino, and it is there that, relying upon your kindness, I shall expect to find her. If she be not there, nor otherwise a letter from you, either to assent or refuse, I shall be forced to proceed to Ravenna, for I am so anxious and miserable until I see her, I can have no rest.

'Though I can hardly believe it possible you will refuse my first request, yet I beg you to remember I did not part with her at Milan until I had received your formal and explicit declaration that I should see my child at proper intervals.

'If you force me to come to Ravenna against the reason of everyone and my own desire, I shall nevertheless be careful not to molest you, and any of your wishes concerning my darling, whether written or in words, will be carefully minded by me.¹

'Farewell—all health to you

'Affectionately yours
'CLAIRE.

'Pray kiss my dear child many times for me.'

Only the day before this letter was sent, Byron had written to Hoppner setting forth his reasons for not sending his child to her mother.

'About Allegra, I can only say to Claire—that I totally disapprove of the mode of children's treatment in that family, that I should look upon the child as going into a hospital. Is it not so? Have they reared one? Her health here has hitherto been excellent, and her temper not bad; she is sometimes vain and obstinate, but always clean and cheerful and as, in a year or two, I shall either send her to England, or put her in a convent for education, these defects will be remedied as far as they can be in human nature.

¹ Claire was persuaded to abandon her plan of going to Ravenna, but her threat of so doing probably strengthened Byron's decision to put his child into a convent.

But the child shall not quit me again to perish of starvation and green fruit,¹ or to be taught to believe that there is no Deity. . . . She has plenty of air and exercise at home, and she goes out daily with Madame Guiccioli to the Corso. Wherever there is convenience of vicinity and access her mother can always have her with her; otherwise no.'

This letter was forwarded to Claire, and she notes in her journal that she has heard from Mrs. Hoppner about 'green fruit and God.' On May 1 she wrote again to Byron in the hope that she might be able to overcome some of his objections. She points out that he has started a new one—that of distance,

'but unless we inhabit a city like London together, it is unlikely that I should be nearer to you than I am at present, so that to say I must live at Ravenna to see her is to put an impenetrable bar between us. In regard to her food, if you will only specify what nourishment she has been accustomed to, every respect shall be paid to your wishes. You disapprove of her being in Mr. Shelley's house, but he is going to be at the Baths of Lucca, and as I am ordered sea-bathing, I intend to profit by an invitation from a friend at Livorno² to reside at her house for that purpose.

'Your fears concerning the child's religious principles are quite unnecessary, as I should never allow her to be taught to disbelieve in what I myself believe, therefore you may be assured that in whatever way you desire, she shall be taught to worship God. Though my creed is different from Shelley's, I must always feel grateful for his kindness (to which I am perhaps indebted for my life), and every day convinces me more of his moral virtue. . . . This letter is an appeal to your justice, since every feeling of kindness towards me seems to have died in your mind. I have exerted myself to remove your objections, and my claim is bare and obvious. . . .

The struggle continued throughout the summer. On September 10, 1820, Byron wrote to Hoppner:

'Claire writes me the most insolent letters about Allegra; see what a man gets by taking care of natural children! Were it not for the poor little child's sake, I am almost tempted to send her back to her atheistical mother, but that would be too bad; you cannot conceive the excess of her insolence, and I know not why, for I have been at great care and expense—taking a house in the

¹ An allusion to Shelley's vegetarian diet.

² Mrs. Gisborne, whose son had fallen in love with Claire, and wished to marry her.

country on purpose for her. She has *two* maids and every possible attention. . . . The girl shall be a Christian and a married woman if possible.'

It was at this time—the autumn of 1820—that the relations between Mary and Claire became so strained that the latter decided to accept a temporary post as governess in a Professor's family at Florence. The two women had lived together through many vicissitudes for over four years, and it was no wonder they had begun to get upon one another's nerves. Shelley, however, enjoyed the company of Claire, who took life less seriously than Mary. She laughed at him, teased him, accompanied him on long tramps and was always ready to discuss everything in heaven and earth. When Claire went away, Shelley wrote long affectionate letters to 'my best girl,' as he called her, and urged her to return if she were not happy. And Claire, whom nature had never intended for a governess, was not at all happy.

The Shelleys had struck root at Pisa. There was Lady Mountcashell,¹ who had left her husband and seven children, and now, under the name of Mrs. Mason, was living very respectably with a Mr. Tighe. And then there was Shelley's cousin, Tom Medwin,² the Greek Prince, Mavrocordato and, most exciting of all, the beautiful Emilia Viviani, who inspired *Epipsychidion*, and was admired by everybody. Trelawny and Captain Williams, with his pretty wife, Jane,³ joined the circle in January, 1821.

Claire, we learn from Shelley, had recovered her spirits, and appeared, on the surface at least, unusually gay and vivacious. It was probably about this time that Medwin met her in Florence. He speaks of her dark hair, and her eyes that flashed with the fire of intelligence.

'As she possessed considerable talent—spoke French and Italian, particularly the latter with all its *nuances* and niceties—she was much courted by the Russian coterie, a numerous and fashionable one in that city. Though not strictly handsome, she was animated and attractive and possessed an *esprit de société* rare among our country-women.'

But Claire's gaiety was soon shattered by the news that Allegra

¹ A daughter of Lord Kingston and a former pupil of Mary Wollstonecraft. She was a kind friend to Claire.

² Author of *Conversations with Byron*.

³ To her Shelley addressed a series of charming lyrics.

had been placed in a convent at Bagnacavallo, about twelve miles from Ravenna. On March 24, 1821, the unhappy mother wrote a long and passionate letter to Byron protesting against this arbitrary act. She reproached him bitterly for the violation of his promise—that the child should live with one of its parents till it was seven years old. She had made enquiries about convent education and found that the state of the children was nothing less than miserable.

'The Italian women,' she continued, 'are bad wives, most unnatural mothers, licentious and ignorant, they are the dishonour and unhappiness of society. . . . How will Lady Byron—never yet justified in her conduct towards you—be soothed and rejoice in the honourable security of herself and her child, and all the world be bolder to praise her prudence, my unhappy Allegra furnishing the condemning evidence.'¹

She entreats him to let her place Allegra at her own expense² in one of the best English boarding-schools, to be chosen by one of Byron's own friends.

On April 3 Byron explained, in a letter to Hoppner, that the child was now four years old and quite beyond the control of the servants, so that he had no resource but to place her (at a high pension)³ in the convent where the air was good and she would have her learning advanced and morality and religion inculcated. He adds, in a later letter: 'It is some consolation that both Mr. and Mrs. Shelley have written to approve entirely, my placing the child with the nuns for the present.'⁴

In August, 1821, Byron sent Shelley an urgent invitation to visit him at Ravenna. The Gambas, the Guiccioli's father and brother had been expelled from the Romagna, the lady herself had fled to Florence, and Byron was making plans for his own departure. The visit was not a happy one—for Shelley. On the first evening Byron blurted out a horrible piece of scandal which had been told him in strictest confidence. It appeared that, nearly a year before, the Hoppners had received a letter from Elise—the

¹ This letter is printed in full in *Byron's Correspondence*: vol. V, Appendix 1.

² Really at Shelley's expense.

³ He paid double terms.

⁴ The Shelleys at this time took Byron's part against Clare. Writing on April 16, Shelley says that he can easily believe that Claire's letters are very provoking, and that her views are unreasonable. 'Mary no less than myself, is perfectly convinced of your conduct towards Allegra having been most irreproachable, and we entirely agree in the necessity, under existing circumstances, of the placing her in a convent near yourself.'

Swiss nurse—now married to a rascally man-servant. She stated that Claire, while in Naples, had given birth to a child by Shelley, which he had torn from her and put into the Foundling Hospital. To Hoppner, Byron had replied that the story no doubt was true and that it was 'just like them.' To Shelley he professed entire disbelief in the scandal.¹ Mary, to whom her husband at once reported the libel, wrote a long and passionately indignant denial of the whole affair to Mrs. Hoppner. Her letter went first to Ravenna, and was shown to Byron who undertook to send it on with his own comments. After his death it was found among his papers.²

While at Ravenna, Shelley rode over to the convent (which his host had never done) taking with him a little gold chain and a basket of sweetmeats for Allegra. He found that the child had grown tall and slight for her age and was much paler, probably from the effects of improper food. But she retained the beauty of her mouth, her dark blue eyes and heavy curls of golden hair. She chattered gaily to Shelley, made him run all over the convent grounds, showed him her little belongings, and ended by ringing the tocsin which summoned the nuns to assemble. 'It required all the efforts of the Prioress to prevent the spouses of God from rendering themselves dressed or undressed, to the signal.' As the child was not scolded for her piece of mischief he thought that she must be indulgently treated.

Thus, in the last glimpse we get of Allegra, she was living up to her charming name.

In October Byron moved to Pisa, but he did not bring Allegra with him. As it was now difficult to get news of the child, kind Mr. Tighe set off on a journey of enquiry to Ravenna, and reported that fever lurked in the marshes of the Romagna, that the food at the convent was meagre, and that the pupils never saw a fire in winter; in short, that only petty tradespeople would send their children to such a place.

Claire wrote appeal after appeal to Byron, urging him to place Allegra with respectable people at Pisa or Florence. She and the Shelleys would promise never to visit the child without the father's consent. Perhaps the last of these appeals, and the most piteous,

¹ Yet across Claire's letter denouncing convents and the immorality of Italian women, he had written: 'The moral part of this letter upon the Italians, etc., comes well from the writer, now living with a man and his wife, and having planted a child in the Fl. Foundling, etc.'

² It has been suggested that the letter had been sent to Mrs. Hoppner and returned by her at Byron's request.

was written on February 28, 1822, when Claire was preparing to join her brother Charles at Vienna, where she hoped to find a situation. She says she can no longer resist the internal, inexplicable feeling that she will never see Allegra again, and she entreats Byron to destroy this feeling by allowing her to meet her child.

'I shall shortly leave Italy for a new country,' she continues, 'to enter upon a disagreeable and precarious course of life. . . . Indeed I cannot go without having first seen and embraced Allegra. . . . My dear Friend, I conjure you do not make the world dark to me, as if my Allegra were dead. In the happiness her sight will cause me I shall gain restoration and strength to enable me to bear the mortifications and displeasure to which a poor and unhappy person is exposed in this world. I wish you every happiness.'¹

But there was no response. At Claire's urgent request Shelley undertook to call on Byron and represent to him that the mother's health was suffering from her intense anxiety on her child's account. The only reply he received, accompanied by a shrug and a half-malicious smile, was that women could not live without making scenes. He refused to go to the convent, or to make any enquiry into the truth of the disquieting reports. For once the gentle Shelley fell into a passion, and declared that he could with pleasure have knocked Lord Byron down. He reflected, however, that he might as well horsewhip the dining-room door.

The Shelleys, with some of their Pisan friends, proposed to spend the summer of 1822 at Spezzia and Claire was invited to join them. Trelawny had brought out a model of an English schooner, and Shelley and Williams were eager to have a boat built to the same design, on which they and their friends could sail the summer sea. But lodgings for so large a party were not easily to be found, and while Claire and Jane Williams were absent house-hunting, Mary noted in her diary 'Evil news.' Allegra had died of typhus fever on April 20. Byron had heard that she was ill, but had kept the tidings to himself.

When Claire returned, Shelley dared not break the news to her at once. Byron was still at his palazzo, a stone's throw away; the mother's grief might turn her brain and lead to a catastrophe. One house had been secured on the coast—the Villa Magni near Lerici—and this the Shelleys and Williamses proposed to share.

¹ Printed in Dowden's *Life of Shelley*.

They insisted that Claire should go with them, but she, finding the villa overcrowded, announced her intention of returning at once to Florence. It was impossible to put off breaking the ill news, but before a word could be spoken, she had guessed the truth. The blow that she had so much dreaded had fallen at last. 'You may judge,' wrote Mary to a correspondent, 'of what was her first burst of grief and despair.' This was followed by an unnatural calmness which surprised her friends—it was no doubt a reaction from the fever of suspense and torment in which she had lived for months past. She only asked for a sight of her child's coffin, a miniature and a lock of her hair. She must have relieved her feelings somewhat by writing a letter of bitter reproach to Byron.¹ But the poet remained impenitent.

'The blow,' he told Shelley, 'was sudden and unexpected. But I have born up against it as best I can. . . . I do not know that I have anything to reproach in my conduct, and certainly nothing in my feelings and intentions towards the dead.'²

Byron made arrangements to have his child's body embalmed and sent to England where he desired that it should be buried in Harrow Church, with a memorial tablet on the wall. But the little waif was denied even the last resting-place that had been designed for her. The Vicar and churchwardens refused to give her hospitality in their church, and she was buried at the entrance, without any tablet or inscription. But one little tribute to her memory was written (in French) by someone connected with the convent. In this it is stated that Marie Allègre Biron entered the Capuchin Convent of St. John the Baptist at the tender age of four and died there on April 20, 1822. Her extraordinary qualities of heart and mind caused her to be long regretted by those who had the happiness of knowing her, especially the Nuns, '*dont elle faisait les délices*.'³

As in the dreadful winter of 1816-17 at Bath, so tragedy followed tragedy during the summer of 1822 at Lerici. Scarcely had the

¹ The letter is not in this collection, but its tone may be gathered from a communication from Shelley to Byron at this time. He apologises for Claire's letter, and says that it should not have been sent if he had known its contents.

² Madame Guiccioli relates that after Byron had heard the bad news, 'his countenance manifested so hopeless, so profound, so sublime a sorrow that he appeared a being of a nature superior to humanity.'

³ 'To preserve a lively remembrance of such an amiable child, the nuns have had made a little statuette, which represents her; they have dressed it in some of her own clothes, that is, a chemise and a red frock, with a little gold chain round the neck.' (From an Italian inventory of Allegra's belongings.)

little party recovered somewhat from their grief at the news of Allegra's death, than Mary, who was expecting another child, fell so desperately ill that for a time her life was despaired of, and her new hopes were shattered.

The conclusion of Shelley's story is too well known to call for more than the briefest reference here. In July he met the Leigh Hunts at Leghorn and took them to Pisa where he established them in a part of Byron's house. He returned to Leghorn on July 8, and he and Williams, against all weatherwise advice, insisted on sailing that night for Lerici. The expected storm broke and the next morning their boat was missing. After ten days of agonised waiting, hoping and fearing, news came that the bodies of Shelley and Williams had been found some miles farther down the coast. Here the grim work of cremation was carried out by Byron and Trelawny. The three bereaved women clung together for a time. 'We have one purse,' wrote Mary, 'and joined in misery, we are for the moment, joined in life.' In September Mary went to Genoa to help Byron and Leigh Hunt with their new paper, *The Liberal*, and Claire set out for Vienna.¹

In a will made in 1817, Shelley had left Claire £12,000,² but the beneficiaries under the will would receive nothing till after the death of his father. Sir Timothy was about seventy and in such bad health that his doctors gave him barely five years to live—but he lingered on for nearly twenty-two years. Mary brought up her boy on a pittance of two or three hundred a year, which she eked out by novel-writing and Keep-sake journalism. Claire found a post as governess with some Russian friends who took her to Moscow. She kept up a fairly regular correspondence with Mary, and in those letters she is said to have painted her own portrait to the life.

'We can see her with all her vivacity, versatility, and resource, her great cleverness, never at a loss for a word, an excuse or a good story—her indefatigable energy, her shifting moods and wild caprices, the bewildering activity of her restless brain and the astonishing facility with which she transferred to paper all her passing impressions. Unimpeachably correct as her conduct had

¹ Trelawny professed to be in love with Claire, and wrote her many affectionate letters. But she had the sense to see that he could never be turned into a satisfactory husband.

² According to Mary, he intended to leave Claire only £6,000, but owing to faulty drafting of a codicil, he appeared to have left her two sums of £6,000 each.

been after her one miserable adventure, she had an innate affinity for anything in the shape of social gossip or scandal. . . . Fill in the few details wanting, the flat sleek black hair—eyes so black that the pupil was hardly to be distinguished from the iris, a complexion which may in girlhood have been olive, but in later life was sallow—features not beautiful and depending on expression for any charm they might have—and she stands before the reader.’¹

The latter part of Claire’s life was happier, or at any rate more comfortable, than the first. When Sir Timothy Shelley died in 1844, Claire came into her £12,000 and settled in London for a time. But she lost so large a portion of her capital in the Lumley Opera House failure that she was driven abroad again, and finally took refuge in her beloved Florence. Here she turned Roman Catholic—in spite of her objection to dogmatic religion—and led a quiet secluded life. She never mentioned her child, and she had no good word to say of Byron,² but Shelley’s portrait hung next to a crucifix upon her wall. She died in 1878, aged eighty, and was buried in the cemetery of S. Maria in the Commune of Bagno a Ripoli, about three miles from Florence.

(Concluded.)

¹ *Vide* Mrs. Julian Marshall’s *Life of Mary Shelley*.

² Her heart did not soften to the poet after his death. Fletcher told Mary Shelley that Byron in his dying moments had murmured Claire’s name, and said that he wished to do something for her.

MEN OF THE 'KAYAK.'

A RECONSTRUCTION.

BY FRANK DEBENHAM.

[*Author's Note :—In the Museum of Marischal College at Aberdeen there is a small skin boat weighing less than 35 pounds, together with a paddle and some hunting weapons. These are the only material reminders of a voyage which was bolder than that of Columbus, of a fate which was harder than that of Magellan and of an incident in the history of discovery which this story endeavours to rescue from oblivion.*

In this skin boat, or kayak, an Eskimo was captured at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the North Sea not far from Aberdeen. He was apparently wounded during the struggle and died at Aberdeen shortly after arrival, where comparatively little interest seems to have been taken in this strange piece of flotsam beyond the preservation of his equipment.

Recently an inspection of his weapons by Mr. John Rymill, himself fresh from spending two years in East Greenland, has established the fact that it was an Eskimo and not a Finn as had been suggested, and that he came from Greenland, a voyage of at least 1,400 miles.

As to how such a journey in such a boat could be made proof has been obtained from the same authority, but why it should be made must remain a mystery, with little more than such imaginative tales as the following to suggest a reason.

Both the story and the accompanying sonnet by Miss Creswick were written in an attempt to do honour to a bold and unknown navigator, and it was perhaps natural to link his deed in the story with those of Mr. H. G. Watkins, the first Englishman to use the kayak in the Eskimo fashion, and to lose his life thereby.

Finally, the setting of the story on the banks of the sluggish stream at Cambridge has its meaning, since it was there that some of Watkins's men demonstrated their skill in the art of rolling, or righting, the kayak. Amongst the spectators there was a small and devoted friend of his whose questions afterwards prompted some of the ideas in the story.

The author trusts that the story will be taken as a tribute to the memory of a great man and a great deed.]

'I'm a kayak,' yelled Ann, revolving herself wildly amongst the bedclothes, 'and that was me rolling round.'

'Don't be silly, Ann,' said eight-year-old June, 'you can't be a *kayak*, it's a boat-thing, and Daddy is going to take me to see John rolling round in the water to-day, so I know.'

'Well, June, you needn't be cross, and when I'm eight, I'll go and see lots and lots and lots of *kayaks*,' was the final remark from Ann, always pert when reminded of her extreme youth.

Thus it was that June sat spellbound on the bank of the river, watching two broad young Englishmen in their Eskimo *kayaks* paddling and rolling and throwing harpoons. It was all very wonderful to her, but her small brain was a little confused by the ceaseless movement, the splash of the roll, the momentary view of the bottom of the *kayak*, the thrill of thinking of her big friend really upside down under it, and the relief when he appeared again with another splash, while the circle of waves from the commotion spread outwards slowly to her feet and fascinated her.

So she leant her head back against the rough bark of the willow tree, and shut her eyes to rest them, until she should hear the next splash. She tried to remember her friend of two years ago, who was the first to learn to roll a *kayak*, and who was so wonderful that she always thought of him when she thought about Jesus.

The splash was a long time coming, so she opened her eyes again, to see what was happening, and was surprised to see that John had gone and instead there was a small brown man in a small brown *kayak*, paddling towards her, and as she watched him he did a roll far more quickly and neatly than her big friends ever did.

He had a shining brown face and she wondered whoever he could be, yet it seemed natural enough when he paddled close to the bank and said: 'O little white girl, I have come with a message for you from a friend of yours who is now friend to me.' And it even seemed natural enough to her to find herself saying to him in a kind of grown-up Bible-talk: 'Tell me the message, O friend of my friend, but tell me first who you are, and whence you come.'

He was very slow to begin, and busied himself first in undoing little bone hooks and buttons from his rolling tunic of seal-skin, and throwing back his close-fitting helmet. His hair was lank and untidy, and his face was lined sadly, but his long brown eyes were friendly and wise. She wanted to ask him ever so many questions, and whether he was cold and hungry, but as soon as he began she forgot all about that and listened to every word.

'I am Netti, Netti from the place men call Tugtalik, and I am

very very old, for I died many many years ago, died with hatred in my heart, but now I am at peace again. I have come from the place where your Jesus lives and it was an easy journey, not like the one I made before I died. Yet am I proud of that journey, though sad I was not to go back and tell my people of it, and the strange things I saw. And now my people are few in number and none live at Tugtalik, and few of them know how to make the journeys we made in those days.

'For we were many and strong, and all up and down that coast were settlements of my people living in their *itos*, and grand it was to go from place to place, and greet the young men, and learn their *kayak* rolls, and dance to their drums, and hear their hunting tales.

'But there were too many of us, and hunting was hard, so that we made long journeys out into the ice, and beyond the ice to the great waves. Oh, the joy of riding the great waves in our *kayaks*.

'And there, on the far edge of the ice, we met one day a man of the place called Angmagssalik, who was tired and sick, and he told us he had been far and far, to a land of great rocks, and burning fires among the rocks, where were many birds, and on beyond to a place of islands where was no ice, but where big men lived and there was green moss and much to eat. But the big men chased him in giant *kayaks*, and called him "Skraeling," so he avoided them, and came back, a long, long paddle, so long that he was too tired, and he died.

'Now when we came back to Tugtalik that time the ice had been away from the coast all the summer, and there was famine, and we had to let the old women die, and were forced to eat dogs, and the bad shark flesh. There was little dancing in the houses, and we looked at each other, and said: "There are too many of us, we must find a place where there is better hunting."

'So I thought over the journey of that man from Angmagssalik and I knew that I too must make that journey, and find a place for my people where the men were big and well fed; they would be good people to make friends with and they had much iron.

'Yet I told no one but the old *angekok* and he said: "There are indeed too many of us and iron is scarce, go and find more." So the young men wondered that I spent the winter building a new and perfect *kayak*, and made a new bird spear, and begged the last piece of iron from the *angekok* for my harpoon. But they said: "Netti is our best hunter, and he goes to make a wonderful sealing," and they helped me with the best wood, and so was my *kayak* built.

'So when the summer came we went out into the big ice, and

lived well, and sent back of our sealing ; but I remembered our bad winter, and made for the outer edge of the ice. And there I stuffed my spare bladder with fresh ice, and took large pieces of blubber and seal, and set off on the great waves and looked not back to my companions. But I was strong, and I was proud, and I was eager to find that place of much to eat and large men.

' There came a day of deep fog, but the wind guided me and all day I paddled seeing nothing but great grey waves, with white caps which I laughed to burst through with my *kayak*. And on the second day it was clear and the wind was strong, but I saw birds, and a cloud towards the south, and I too was strong, and at last I came to the land of rocks. And there I landed on a small island and killed birds and stilled my hunger and slept.

' And I paddled along that land many days, till I came to the last corner, and could see nothing to the south. I landed many times, but the rocks were rough, and the giant moss was thick, and I went not far inland ; but I saw steam in places, and knew it was the land reached by the man from Angmagssalik.

' And at that last corner I filled my bladder with water and killed many birds, though, alas, I broke my bird harpoon on the rocks, and I set out again on the great waves.

' And that was a bad journey, and I had no rest, but when my water was gone and the birds, I harpooned a big fish and became strong again, and reached more islands of rocks. There I rested and fed, but there were no men, and it was foggy and cold, and I knew I was too far to the north.

' So again I set out, more to the south, and the waves were strong, and many times I had to roll, and I was tired, and that was the worst journey of all. And it came so warm that my meat went bad, and I could not turn back because of the wind, and I lost my pride in my strength. But at last I came to a great land and fed and rested. This must be the land of the big men, but I feared to meet them on land, and so I paddled on down that coast and was strong again, though I liked not the great warmth.

' But there came a day when I saw a great boat, larger than all the *oomiaks* of my settlement put together, and I knew my journey done. These were the great men, and they would feed me and I would go back and bring my people.

' And I paddled to them. But they cried out, and pointed things at me which blew fire and I was afraid. Then they cast small boats out from the big one, and chased me. I was tired, and they caught

me, and they thrust iron into me and hurt me. They were white and they had hairy faces, but they were strong and cruel and laughed not at all.

'And they carried me and my *kayak* and all my things on their big boat, and gave me food that made me sick, and I was sore of the wound, and a great tiredness came on me. I spoke with them, but we could not understand each other, and I was lonely and sad. And they took me to a place where their settlement was, and I saw many people and things of iron, but I was too tired. I had made my great journey and I had found the great men, but they were fierce and harsh: what use to go back and tell my people we could not come here? And my wound was sore, and the noise of talk was ill to hear, and I turned on my side, and there was a great blackness and I died, with hatred for these people.'

June's eyes filled with tears at the story of the little brown man with the sad face and the kindly eyes, and he saw her tears, and said: 'Oh, little friend of my friend, weep not for me, for all that was a long while ago,' and he smiled at her, and went on: 'For then I found myself in a Place of Content, and sometimes I see my people who have died after me, and sometimes I see all the things I lived amongst.'

'Once I saw a great *ito*, all built of stone in the place where I died, and many of our Eskimo things in it. And there, on the wall, hung my very own *kayak* that I had built for myself, and so glad was I to see it, that I forgot to be sad that they had not kept it soft with blubber, so it had warped itself all crooked. And they had put wrong pieces of wood where I had burst the ring in fleeing from those cruel men, and they had not greased my harpoon or mended my paddle. But my broken bird spear was there just as I had broken it on those hard rocks at the great Island of Rocks on my journey.'

'And after a great while there came to that Place of Content people who told me that the great white men were not all cruel, and that they sometimes came to our coast in great ships, and brought with them food and iron, and were kind to our people.'

'And sometimes I saw Tugtalik again, but there was no one there, and all our *itos* were just crumbling mounds of stone, though our lake was full of fish and there were many seals in the fjord, down by the dangerous face of the ice which falls in the sea.'

'Once I saw a strange sight on that lake, when a great whirring bird-machine came flying through the air and landed on the surface, floating on two small *kayaks*; and out of it there stepped two

white men, and one was thin and keen of face, and fair and with smooth hair like a woman's, with a straight parting. But I knew that this was a man of men, strong yet kind, and of a mighty courage.

'I was to see that man again in Tugtalik when I saw him much later in a *kayak*, but that was after those of my people, who had died, had come to tell me the white men were learning to hunt in our *kayaks*. At first I feared for my people, but they told me that the white men, great and strong as they were, were no better at the *kayak* hunt than we, and I could still call myself the strongest of all *kayak* men, having done the longest journey of all.

'And then there came a time when I was looking at my beloved Tugtalik, and the lake, and saw people there again, and again they were white, and again I feared. Four men there were, and the bird man was one of them, the best of them, hunting each day in his *kayak* near the place of falling ice.

'He was a clever hunter, for he hunted alone, as we dare not, unless we be the best of *kayakers*, and I wished to warn him of the falling ice, but I feared him, and his living where our own people used to live.

'Yet was I sad when he died, for losing his *kayak* by a wave from falling ice, he feared not to swim after it, though he failed. Nor did he fear death, for he sank smiling and in peace, having done his utmost as brave men do.

'Therefore great was my gladness when later he came amongst us, speaking our language, and knowing then my story shook me by the hand and called us brothers, and many times we talked of hunting and *kayaks*, and the great days we had had.

'Now in that Place of Content there is one thing only of unease, that we can speak not to our people except sometimes to children, and then only if the child be fain and wistful for the dead one. So it came that, seeing that there was to be *kayak*-ing in this far country and wishing to see more of these great men managing our hunting gear, I happened on this man with the eager face and brave eyes, and he told me of a little white girl of his own country who might be there, and he gave me a message, which was thus:

"Tell her I am not as tall as Jesus, but thank her for thinking so."

And as he said so there was a loud splash. He was rolling in that quick deft way of his, but as it came round again it was no longer the

little brown man but her huge friend John again, smiling at her wide eyes.

But June was sad, for she wanted to ask the little brown man more about that wonderful friend who had sent her the message, and as she went home in the car with Daddy she sat silent in the corner and whispered to herself:

'But I still think he is as tall as Jesus.'

DÉFAIT TRIOMPHANT.

And so you passed the seas on summer's tide,
And all your people watching on the shore,
Were sorrowful, for one who nevermore
Would come again . . .

'But he is brave,' they cried.

And so adventure, and, as gannets ride,
The strange, uncoloured waves, and know their law,
So you: where none like you had come before.
And thus you sought your dream, and finding, died.

You brown Columbus of a colder sea,
Lonely those nights and hard, uncounted days,
That spelled your coming; yet the best was yours—

You are of those who reached their visioned shores,
And died, lest life should hold less splendid ways,
And dying, gave their dreams eternity.

F. E. CRESWICK.

INKY WOOING.

BY JOHN LAMBOURNE.

[*Horace, a terrier owned by Charles Wilburton, introduces his master to Jane Whittle by means of a mêlée with her Aberdeens, Sealyhams and Pekes. Jane also owns Mogul, a prize mastiff, is the daughter of an apple-expert, and is engaged to Hubert Chipping, a writer. Charles is hardly a success with Mr. Whittle, but still decides to win Jane.*]

CHAPTER III.

OF HOW CHARLES MET AN AUTHOR (*contd.*).

It was a source of deep regret to Charles that he had not the entrée to Bransby Towers. He had been warned, however, by Jane that for the present it would not do to call. The young man who had awakened him from sleep to ask him if he was insured was still fresh in her father's mind and the time was far from ripe for any efforts at conciliation. Her father, she explained, put him now in the same class as the Apple Sucker (*Psylla mali*), the Saw Fly (*Hylotoma pomorum*), or the Wood Louse, and would be more likely to greet him with a spurt of insecticide than with the open hand of friendship.

From this it will be gathered by the intelligent reader that Jane herself was still on friendly terms with Charles—in spite of his lack of taste in practically proposing to an engaged girl. There was a reason for this which the ever-busy psychologists, delving amongst the impulses which prompt human action, have brought to the surface; namely, that try as she may the female of the human species finds it very hard to condemn a man for admiring her. In this particular matter she is broad-minded. She sees both sides of the question. She forgives and even pities.

It was so with Jane. She forgave Charles. His lot, she thought, was sad enough. Besides, he was good-looking and amusing, while her fiancé, Hubert Chipping, was neither, running entirely to brain and being otherwise pasty in appearance and heavy in manner. Alas! we cannot have everything.

Friendly relations with Charles had been re-established automatically. They had drifted back into them straight away over the matter of the dogs. Those erring animals had been found in a field at Great-Malham-in-the-Marsh. Here they had taken the sheep, and one (probably Horace) had arranged opposing sides: one side to chase the sheep in this direction, the other in that. The side that drove the sheep right through scored a goal. At the time of discovery the score stood at 36 to 23. A splendid time had been had by all except the sheep.

Horace paid the bill and there was wailing and gnashing of teeth, but since he had words with a large collie immediately afterwards one may assume that his spirit remained unbroken.

Jane, of course, even had she wanted to, could not forbid Charles to take walks. He took many walks, and she could rarely go out without meeting him. No big-game hunter ever studied the movements of his quarry more assiduously than Charles did Jane's. And rarely did he fail to track her down. Horace played his part, for Horace was as keen on these meetings as was his master. When Charles was at fault Horace would find. The Aberdeens, Sealyhams, and Pekes were dogs after Horace's own heart—especially the Aberdeens. They admired him and followed him. They recognised in him a master of wickedness and one worthy of respect. Given a little time, they argued to themselves, and we shall become even as he. They were not far wrong. Apt pupils, Horace soon found that he had taught them pretty nearly all he knew himself.

In other words, a hitherto orderly and sweet little flock of dogs became a stench in men's nostrils. Cats selected likely trees before they walked abroad. A more than usually worried look became apparent on the faces of the sheep.

Jane did not particularly want a meeting to take place between Hubert Chipping and Charles Wilburton. She had an idea that, superficially, her fiancé would suffer by comparison. Hubert did not shine in conversation. Although the publishers, in their review of his book, had said: *Relentless as this author is in his exposé of modern society he has his lighter moments, and on many pages there appears a humour both mordant and satirical*, no humour of any sort, either mordant or satirical, escaped him in conversation. He was, in fact, dumb. Even Jane had to confess that as a conversationalist he was a complete loss. She had accepted him partly because her father wanted it (Hubert was the son

of a neighbouring landowner, presumably well off in the world's goods) and partly for his brain. Jane was an outdoor girl finding it hard to put five consecutive words on paper—though by no means similarly handicapped in the way of speech. A man who could write a whole book must, she thought, have something pretty outsize in the way of brain. Besides, a girl had to marry. She got more freedom and power that way. Betty Cart-right and Mildred Hensey, bosom pals once, had both married and were inclined to be condescending on account of it. So Jane had the strongest possible motives for entering into the state of holy matrimony with Hubert Chipping. But he was not a man to make an impression on her friends. Once married, of course, she could keep him more or less in the background when visitors came. A row of his books on the shelf would be sufficient without the man himself.

She was none too well pleased, therefore, the next Thursday, when walking with Hubert, to see those persistent features of the countryside, Charles and Horace, walking towards her. Her greeting was cold, and the introduction to her fiancé short.

Charles, who had been expecting a dome-like forehead, noted with surprise Hubert's narrow brow, contracted at the moment into an annoyed frown.

'Mr. Wilburton is staying at Stough for a week or so,' explained Jane.

'Is the week nearly up?' asked Hubert, watching the sheep-like look that Charles was giving Jane.

'The week is up,' said Charles; 'I'm just beginning the *or so*.'

'I suppose you knew him before?' said Hubert to Jane.

'No,' said Jane. 'You see, my dogs bit him.'

Hubert said nothing, but stood speechless, idly fondling one of the dogs.

'He came to our house,' continued Jane, 'to put iodine on the wounds, and—well—'

'And,' supplemented Charles, 'after that our intimacy grew and ripened.'

Hubert's frown deepened.

'I hear you write,' said Charles pleasantly, trying to introduce a more friendly note into the conversation.

'Yes,' said Hubert.

'Frightfully brainy—what?'

'Oh, I don't know,' hesitated Hubert, the frown disappearing.

'Well, a whole book, you know, is a frightful lot. How do you set about it?'

'Well, you . . .'

'Kind of start at the beginning?'

'Yes.'

'And go on till you come to the end?'

'In a way.'

'I can understand anyone doing the beginning and the end. It's the in-between bit that would be difficult, I should think. So much of it.'

'Yes. There is rather a lot.'

Charles was feeling better. From Hubert he had expected something pretty deep: flights of rhetoric, abstruse propositions, flows of soul, that would have left him gasping like a stranded fish. Highbrow stuff. Instead, up to the present, he might have been talking to one recovering from a successful operation for the removal of the brain. He began to feel on equal terms with him, and after a few more words on the same level he addressed himself to Jane. In loquacity, he realised, lay his hope. Jane admired Hubert's brain. But it was a speechless brain and since you couldn't see a brain what pleasure would she get out of it in the long years that lay ahead? Surely, thought Charles, if I entertain her with quip and crank she will begin to think. Reflection will set in. Hubert in the house will be like a mute wireless; a perfect instrument, perhaps, with super valves and well-charged batteries, but pretty useless without a loud-speaker.

So he prattled as they walked along, and Hubert remained dumb. The frown settled permanently on his brow. It betokened, Charles decided, either deep thought or considerable annoyance.

It was Hubert who discovered the absence of the dogs. He was surprised. Not so Charles and Jane. They were used to it. For never a day passed now but those children of sin would sneak off quietly to pillage and lay waste the countryside.

CHAPTER IV.

OF HOW FAME BECKONED CHARLES.

The time came when Charles, leaning out of a carriage window, waved his farewell to Jane. She stood, a dainty figure in white, in the field beyond the station, surrounded by her dogs.

Even Mogul was there, paternally waving his tail at the express and making it feel like one of the Hornby variety.

Horace, both feet on the window-ledge, looked sad as the figures flashed by. He was thinking of the things he might have done. Good people, we are told, suffer much from the thought of good deeds left undone. But their suffering is as nothing to that of bad people at the thought of misdeeds they might have had a stab at, but have not attempted. So with Horace. He realised that he was leaving this place and these dogs probably for ever and there flashed through his mind the picture of a hundred uncommitted crimes. 'For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: "It might have been!"' Horace sighed.

And Charles was far from cheerful. After waving frenziedly until the white figure was out of sight, he sank back in his seat and gave himself up to sad reflections. He was leaving Jane. That in itself was bad enough. What was worse was the thought that he had made no real progress. True, towards the end she had treated him more or less as a friend. She liked his company. He amused her. But to be looked upon as a relaxation for lighter hours was not what he was after. He wanted more than that. Much more. And what hope had he? The man she revered was the silent Hubert. Just because he, Charles, had no brain and had not written a book he was not in the running. He might talk till his throat was sore, and it made no difference. She simply didn't take him seriously.

By the time he got to his flat in Keen Street he was in the lowest depths of depression. A cursory glance at London girls had confirmed his worst fears. Jane was immeasurably superior to all others and he could never care two hoots about anyone else. His life was wrecked.

The manservant let him in. It was a small flat, but a very comfortable one. Charles, in fact, did himself pretty well. As we have said, he was not dependent on his insurance activities for his living. Had he been so, he would by now have been selecting a nice sheltered spot on the Embankment.

He ordered a drink—a strong one—took his things off, and let himself down into an armchair.

When the drink arrived he swallowed it and ordered another. This girl was driving him to drink. Perhaps when she saw him, a hopeless wreck, a mere pitiful caricature of the fellow she had known, his manhood stolen from him, the glorious promise of his

youth unfulfilled, she would be sorry for the way she had treated him.

On the other hand, she might be glad.

He took a paper from the table and turned the pages listlessly. He raised his glass to his mouth, but before he had necked the contents his eye caught an advertisement and he sat staring at it, the drink forgotten in his hand.

The small photograph of a woman half-way down was of sufficiently repellent ugliness to have stunned anyone, but it was not at this that Charles was staring, but at these large headlines :

CAN YOU WRITE ?

YOU *THINK* NOT !

Then listen : George Mundon guarantees complete success in five lessons !

Charles re-read this. Then he attacked the mass of smaller print underneath.

Think what this means ! To be a successful novelist and journalist in five lessons ! Impossible, you say ! It is not impossible ! *Anyone* can write provided they put themselves into the hands of Mr. Mundon of the Metropolitan School of Writing !

THOUSANDS OF TESTIMONIALS !

Price of the five lessons, £7 7s. 0d. !

Price of ten lessons, £10 10s. 0d. !

It went on :

Never before has there been such a dearth of new writers ! Publishers, magazine editors, newspapers, are crying out for trained writers :

And they can't get enough !

Why not help to fill this gap ? Why not reap the huge rewards that lie waiting for new writers ? Perhaps you don't want money ! If so, Mr. Mundon does not want *you* ! But if you want money ! If four or five or six or seven hundred or *any* amount per annum made in your spare time interests you, then,

DO NOT DELAY !

Enrol immediately in the Metropolitan School of Writing. The exceptional opportunities of to-day will not occur again !

Send at once for our prospectus !

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Then came the photograph of the repellent female. It was a testimonial.

I was a servant girl and until I read Mr. Mundon's advertisement I had never dreamed of writing. I had had no education——

Charles's mouth was now wide open. He read on. There were other testimonials and (for unknown reasons) other photographs. A chauffeur, a Miss Amelia Robinson who, previous to Mr. Mundon's course, had never been able to write a grammatical sentence and was now sought after by all the leading papers. There was a clerk——

Charles flung the paper down. Why had he not been told this before—that with no experience, aptitude, or even brain one could become a famous writer by taking a course of lessons? Let Hubert Chipping look well to himself, for he—Charles—was going to enter the lists. He would take Mr. Mundon's course. He also would write a book.

He went over to his desk, got paper and pen, and began to write to the Metropolitan School of Writing. Then he stopped. This would waste valuable time. He would be sent the prospectus. He would have to write back. Also, on paper, he could never explain the urgency of his case. As yet he was not proficient with the pen. That would come later. No, he would call on Mr. Mundon the next morning, talk things over and get the five lessons rushed through. For after the five lessons he had the whole book to write. He worked it out. It would take a long time. Giving insurance a rest for a bit he might write fifteen pages a day. It would take three to four weeks to write the book, a week perhaps to get it typed, a week to fix things up with the publisher, and then, possibly, another week before it was printed and published.

Time pressed.

CHAPTER V.

OF HOW MR. MUNDON CAUGHT A SUCKER.

Mr. George Mundon, the principal of the Metropolitan School of Writing, leant back in his chair, thumbs in his waistcoat arm-holes, and surveyed a long, hatchet-faced, dyspeptic-looking individual.

'See here, Ely,' he said. 'Get this straight. I'm through with tyke-liftin'. I'm through with selling mines. I'm in the lit'rary line, and in the lit'rary line I stay! If you don't reckonise a soft job when you've found one, it ain't my fault. And if you want assistance in anything disres respectable you'll have to blame-well go somewhere else.'

The dyspeptic-looking individual's reply was short but conveyed a world of meaning and disgust.

'Ach!'

The above, perhaps, calls for a word or so of explanation. The reader will have noticed that we avoid explanations whenever possible—chiefly because the school of writing we attend has emphasised the need for action. 'Let your story move,' it has told us. 'Let it move and never halt. If explanations or previous histories are necessary let them be brought in in the course of ordinary conversation.' Now this is all very well, but the previous histories of George Mundon and Ely Roost were such that they took great care never to bring them up in the course of ordinary conversation, and were wise in so doing. We are forced, therefore, in this instance, to disobey our school.

Americans to the core, these two had left that great country for quite adequate reasons shortly before our history opens. They had selected England as their home from home because it was generally considered to be—after America—the best land for mutts. Ely Roost had been a dog expert and knew all the best markets in the States. He carried on his profession in England, shipping valuable dogs over to New York. For some little time George Mundon had worked with him, but later had branched off on his own into the mining business. Now it would seem that an American trying to sell mines, however richly imagined, in England would meet with little success. Englishmen are suspicious of Americans who come along selling shares in mines. Mr. Mundon, however, selected not Englishmen but Americans, and the American in England is as wax in the hands of another American. Sick to death of cissy voices and unnatural accents, the dulcet tones of New York City speak to his very heart-strings. Mr. Mundon never had any difficulty. In broad, nasal tones he sold shares in non-existent mines to some fifteen Americans in the course of three weeks.

But it was a game that could not go on. Mr. Mundon knew—after much experience—that the wise man is the man who clears

out before the beans are spilt. He returned then to his old profession, and worked once more with Ely. But he was not altogether happy. It seemed to him that in a world so full of suckers there must be legitimate ways of treating them in the manner to which they are accustomed. Why, argued he, incur risk in following one's calling if risk is unnecessary? There are more ways of opening an oyster than breaking one's teeth on it. So he cast about in his mind for ways of parting fools from money on which the law would not only refrain from frowning but would actually smile.

Fools, Mr. Mundon argued, are divided into several classes. The question he set himself to solve was which class is, on the whole, the most fatuous, the most feeble-minded, the most gullible. He was not long in arriving at the conclusion that the palm of idiocy is taken by the writing class. He had mixed with all classes of men and women, his circle of acquaintances was large, and of these some 33 per cent were writers or would-be writers. In addition he had in America three aunts, two sisters, and an illegitimate half-cousin who—as they put it—‘wrote.’ To such a keen student of human nature, therefore, there was little about this fatuous class that he did not know. He knew, for instance, that the frenzy of the bull moose in the mating season is as nothing to the frenzy of the would-be writer to get into print. And it was his opinion that in spite of the number of institutions already established for the purpose of turning this frenzy into hard cash there was plenty of room for more.

He therefore rented a tiny office in the Strand and, with the proceeds of the *Blue Horizon* mine, inserted in several papers the advertisement that Charles had read.

His method was simple. He himself had taken a course at another school and with the help of two clerks—enticed from the same school—had drawn out lessons on similar but simpler lines. The students were invited to send in essays. These essays were then commented on in such general terms that the same comments could apply to each and their work need not be read—a great saving in time, labour and expense.

The staff consisted of the two clerks aforesaid and Ely Roost, who had been given the job for old times' sake. Ely Roost—we might as well say so straight away—did not take to the business. Although the very first assays proved that they had struck rich ore he was unimpressed. He was a dog lover and his mind ran

on dogs. He was conservative and sighed for the good old days when he and George worked together with a bottle of aniseed.

Which brings us again to the beginning of this chapter, where we see George Mundon definitely refusing to assist his friend in acquiring a valuable dog calculated to fetch, at a modest estimate, two thousand dollars in America.

It was at this moment that Charles found the small tablet outside the door :

Mr. George Mundon.

The Metropolitan School of Writing,

3rd Floor.

It was not what he had expected—the unattractive neighbourhood, the filthy windows, the air of poverty and decay. He went inside, hesitated, then made his way up the bare, dusty, wooden stairs into the blackness above. Anon, he came to the door on which in bold, new lettering were the words : *Mr. George Mundon*. He knocked, thereby postponing for the time being Mr. Ely Roost's tenth resignation.

'Come right in,' said a voice.

Charles, entering, saw a tiny office, a desk littered with papers, a third-hand typewriter on a table in the corner. He looked enquiringly at the gaunt figure of Mr. Roost, then at the beefy proportions and battered, pugilistic features of Mr. Mundon.

'Er . . . I wanted to see Mr. George Mundon.'

'That's me, son,' said the prize-fighter.

'Oh ! You're an American ?'

'Say !' said Mr. Mundon, puzzled, 'who in heck told you that ?'

'I guessed it. I saw your advertisement in the *Morning Telegraph*.'

'Ain't it a one !' said Mr. Mundon, well pleased. 'Cheques, sir, by every post. Easy as sucking your thumb.'

'Could I speak to you alone ?'

'Sure. Ely here'll beat it for a space. He ain't int'rested in the business, anyhow. Ely, go and take a walk.'

Ely rose, took his hat from the peg, and went out. He was a man of few words.

Mr. Mundon indicated the chair left vacant by his departure. Charles sat down.

'Shoot,' said Mr. George Mundon.

'Well,' began Charles, 'it's about writing——' He broke off and looked round again. 'Is this your only place?' he asked.

'Only place!' said Mr. Mundon. 'This, sir, is *my* office. The routine work of the——' he glanced at a paper—'of the Metropolitan School of Writing is done in a large and commodious building elsewhere.'

'Where?'

Mr. Mundon waved a large hand airily. 'Over there,' he said. 'Did you want to see me special?'

'Yes. It's about writing.'

'The business,' said Mr. Mundon reprovingly, 'is conducted by co-correspondence.'

'I know, but you see . . .' He hesitated.

'Shoot,' said Mr. Mundon.

'Well, it's like this. I might as well tell you the whole thing. There's a girl I know who happens to be rather keen on writing people. In fact, she won't look at anybody unless he writes.'

'And a pity,' said Mr. Mundon, 'there ain't more like her. If every girl was like this Jane you re-fer to——'

'Well, you see,' went on Charles, interrupting, 'she wouldn't look at me, of course, and I thought it was all up until I saw your advertisement. You say there that you can teach anyone to become a writer.'

'Sure.'

'Whether they've written before or not?'

'Sure.'

'Well—that's why I came. I wanted to put my case before you, and I want to start straight away. I wanted to get a book published if possible within two months.'

'Wrote it?' asked Mr. Mundon.

'Not yet. I'll have to take the course first.'

Mr. Mundon looked at him. Even he, little as he knew about these things, thought two months optimistic.

'You'll have to move,' he said.

'I know. That's why I came here personally instead of writing.'

'Then we'll get busy right now, sonny. The fee's seven guineas and you write a trial essay.'

'Is a trial essay necessary?'

'It's the routine. In your case I'll make a con-cession. You

can join straight away, here and now, then write your trial essay to-night. Mind you, as a rule, we don't accept folk till we've seen their trial essay.'

'Why not?'

'Well, it's kind of the routine. And then, if folks write so bad we can't do anything with 'em—why, we don't accept them.'

'I thought you said you could make anyone a writer.'

'Pretty near. But there is limits. And anyhow in your case we're accepting you. But we'll need this tri-al essay to figure out the lines of too-ition.'

'What do I write about?'

'Anything. Any mortal thing, sir. It doesn't matter,' he added truthfully.

'But I don't think I could—not till I've taken the course. Why not begin on the course straight away?'

'It's like I told you—it's our or'nary routine. We get this essay of yourn, and then other essays. We study them and find out your weak points and your strong points, and shape the following lessons accordin'. Get me?'

'I see. Well, I suppose I'll have to write about something.'

'Sure! It's easy. Say, haven't you ever written *anything*?'

'Not a thing.'

'And you're figuring to start a book?'

'After the course.'

'Does this Jane of yours want a book particular? A few articles in a noospaper, now? How'd she like that?'

'No; it's a book she wants. How did you know her name was Jane?'

'It's a kind of term for dames in general. Now see here, Mr.—'

'Wilburton.'

'Mr. Wilburton, a book's a biggish proposition. What I propose is that you go and sound this piece of goods of yours. Put it to her straight about an article in a noospaper. Maybe she's talking big.'

Charles shook his head. 'It must be a book,' he said. 'You see the other fellow has written a book.'

'Oh, there's another fellow?'

'Yes. What's more, it's a little difficult to get in touch with her. I have to wait in the lane. You see, her father doesn't like me.'

'Now that's too bad!' said Mr. Mundon sympathetically. 'You done him bad?'

'I woke him up in the middle of the afternoon.'

'There's no law against waking folk up in the afternoon!'

'No, and there's no law against their forbidding you their house.'

'He's forbad you the house?' asked the teacher of English in surprise.

'Yes. Bransby Towers is closed to me.'

Mr. Mundon, who had been fingering a paper-weight, dropped it.

'Bransby what?' he said.

'Bransby Towers.'

'Well, if that don't beat the book!'

'What?'

'This Jane of yours,' said Mr. Mundon, wishing to get it right, 'lives at Bransby Towers?'

'Yes.'

'Could you believe it?'

'What's the matter?'

'Nothing.' Mr. Mundon sat in glassy-eyed thought for some moments, then turned briskly to Charles. 'All right,' he said. 'We'll enrol you here and now and you can get busy.'

'Why were you so surprised when I mentioned Bransby Towers?'

'Me! I weren't surprised. It's a kind of funny name, that's all. . . . Now, sir?'

Writing slowly he took down Charles's name and address, lent him pen and ink to make out his cheque, and then shook hands with him as a duly enrolled member of the Metropolitan School of Writing.

'Maybe,' he said, 'you'd like to join up now for a further five lessons at the re-dooed charge of nine guineas *in toto*?'

'You said five would be sufficient!'

'Well, yes . . . maybe.'

'You said,' went on Charles, 'that in five lessons one could become a successful writer.'

'Yes . . . but if you want to get to the top of the tree, the *very* top, sir, why then you'll take the extra five.'

'Thanks,' said Charles somewhat coldly, 'I'll try being just a successful writer first.'

'That's as you like,' said Mr. Mundon, rising to shake hands again.

The door had not long closed upon Charles before it opened again to admit that lover of good dogs, Mr. Ely Roost. In spite of several gins at *The Falcon* he seemed in no sunnier mood. 'Was dat guy a sucker?' he asked morosely.

Mr. Mundon showed the cheque.

'And I've got some noos for you, Ely,' he said.

Mr. Roost grunted.

'You saw that young fellow?'

'De sucker?'

'Yes. Well, it's like this: his Jane—this fellow's—is the girl at Bransby Towers!'

Mr. Roost looked up quickly. He stared at the other. 'De goil at Bransby Towers!' he echoed.

'You've said it.'

'Quit kidding!'

'I'm telling you.'

'On de level?'

'Yep.'

'George, you're not foolin'?''

'Nope.'

'Then, George,' said Mr. Roost, enthusiasm lighting up his melancholy face, 'de doig's ourn!'

His friend stared at him. 'How do you work that out?'

'Easy. You get de sucker to ask you dere to see his goil. You get in wid her pop, woik a dodge to get him ask you stay de night, den let de doig out and I'm waitin'.'

'Oh, ye-es!'

'George, you wouldn't let a pal down!'

'How often am I telling you, Ely, that I'm through with dog lifting?'

'But, George—it's just this onct. Any odder tyke I'd lift myself. Bud dis Mogul sleeps inside and dere's no manner of way of getting at it till I gets someone posted dere.'

'And for why,' asked Mr. Mundon witheringly, 'should this sucker ask me there to see his girl? And why should her pop ask me to stay the night?'

'Aw, George—you can work it! You're lit'rary. You've got a brain, George. You wouldn't let me down!'

'The guy says he's not allowed in the house, anyway.'

'For why not?'

'Her old man don't like him.'

'What for he doesn't like him? Seemed a nice guy to me.'
 'I tell you, he ain't allowed in the house. It's no use arguing.
 If I——'

At this moment one of the clerks entered with papers and the discussion came to an end for the time being.

CHAPTER VI.

OF HOW MR. MUNDON WAS TEMPTED.

That evening saw Charles in the agonies of composition. After much thought he had chosen 'Insurance' as his subject. The beginning had been the worst. A full waste-paper basket bore witness to these early efforts. But there is no limit to what red-hot enthusiasm will accomplish, and now he was launched and was getting along well. Writing, he thought as he worked, was not so difficult as people imagined. Once started it went on . . . and on.

We will not quote his essay. That lies between himself and Mr. Mundon, who, in any case, did not read it. Charles, one day, may be a well-known writer—it is unlikely, but he may—and he will not thank us then for making public his first halting efforts. All of us have our beginnings. Washington could not tell a lie, but lived to be a great statesman. Caruso's voice had once to be mercifully stopped with a comforter. What we feel about it is that Charles, one day, may write better essays. It is unlikely, at any rate, that he will write worse.

The criticisms of the Metropolitan School of Writing were received by return post.

DEAR SIR,—

We have read your essay entitled Insurance. For a first essay this shows great promise. There is a latent strength which, developed, might lead to great things. At present the style is undisciplined and the subject is presented in a way that, while it leaves much to be desired could, with training, be made to appeal strongly to modern editors. In your particular case,

therefore, we shall have pleasure in enrolling you as a member of the school at the usual fee of £7 7s. 0d.

(Signed) GEORGE MUNDON,
Metropolitan School of Writing.

He was a little puzzled about the 'enrolling' part. That, he had thought, was all fixed up. But he had interfered with 'routine' and did not realise that this letter was sent to all aspiring students as soon as their trial essay was received. On the whole he was greatly encouraged by the commendation. Without a doubt, writing was a talent that had been lying dormant in him. And but for Mr. Mundon it might have lain dormant for ever.

'Full many a gem—'

He, at any rate, was not going to blush unseen. That catastrophe had been averted. He became lost in dreams. His mind travelled forward into the future. He saw this same room hundreds of years hence full of American tourists, hats in hand. 'This is the room,' the guide was saying, 'where Charles Wilburton actually worked. The desk in the corner—kindly not to touch, sir—is said to be the actual desk where he produced his first essay and subsequently his first book. The armchair—no, sir, visitors are not allowed to sit in it—is where Mrs. Wilburton, formerly Miss—'

At this moment came the post with the first lesson. Charles tore open the envelope eagerly.

To work. . . .

It was an axiom with Mr. Mundon that the other fellow should do the work whenever possible. This first lesson, therefore, merely invited Mr. Wilburton to write an article three hundred words in length on:

(1) Civilisation.

(2) Astronomy.

or (3) Flowers.

It gave a few rules—three in all—and evidently considered these enough to be going on with.

The rules were:

(1) Be brief and to the point.

(2) Don't ramble (rather superfluous, one would have thought, in view of Rule No. 1).

(3) Make all your sentences short and snappy.

The last rule worried Charles. He liked long sentences. One could get so much more into them. Still, he got pen and paper.

He would write about flowers. He knew little about them, but he knew less about the other things. He had occasionally bought carnations at Hick's in Dover Street where they kept a particularly high-stepping piece of goods as an assistant: a figure and a pair of eyes that literally—but these were things of the past.

Flowers. Be brief. Don't ramble. Short, snappy sentences. Eyes on the ball. Don't pull. Charles was off.

FLOWERS.

Amongst the beauties of the countryside which we see in spring although they grow abundantly even perhaps more abundantly at other seasons of the year particularly in summer and less so in autumn though none, or very few at any rate, in winter, the most beautiful are undoubtedly flowers.

Very good. But what about those short, snappy sentences? Those short, snappy sentences were going to come difficult. He had been developing, he considered with truth, a style all his own and those short, snappy sentences were coming along to spoil it. Absolutely. He gnawed the end of his pen. Well, if it had to be, it had to be. The Metropolitan School of Writing must know. The partly written sheet went into the waste-paper basket, its spiritual home, and a fresh sheet lay before him.

His idea of what constituted a sentence was vague. He knew it began with a capital letter and terminated with a full stop—nothing more. He was in fact, in this one respect, well fitted to compete with the most brilliant of modern writers.

Off again:

Flowers are beautiful. Tulips. Marigolds. Primroses. Etc. Take a walk. In spring. Or in summer. In the country. In the lanes. In the footpaths. In the fields. What do you see? Flowers. Masses of them. Like a carpet. Or. In smaller patches. Like a rug. What sort of flowers? Wild Flowers. Some prefer cultivated ones. Roses. Carnations. These are generally. Sold in shops. With beautiful assistants. Glorious. Handsome. Highly coloured. Heavily scented.

A bit like poetry, he decided, this short sentence stuff. He was getting into the way of it. And on the whole, he thought, his style was improved.

He went on.

By the third lesson he began to wonder whether or not he

ought to start his book. He had made great strides. He had acquired a power of words and phrases that simply stunned him. He could write, he felt, on anything. So why not write his book while he was taking the last two lessons? He had thought out the plot. It was to be highly original. It was to be about a girl, a beautiful girl, who falls in love with a bounder. Another man loves her—a good-looking young man. Nevertheless, she decides to marry the bounder because he is clever. In the meantime, the good-looking young man, at considerable personal risk and inconvenience, finds out that the bounder is a crook. The book was to end with a scene in the church where the good-looking young man arrives in time to stop the girl's marriage to the bounder.

Pretty good!

A consultation with Mr. Mundon was obviously indicated. He had some business to do in the West End. He would do it that afternoon and call at the school afterwards.

The staff had left when he arrived, and Mr. Mundon was alone.

'I was just de-parting,' said he, after shaking hands and motioning Charles to a seat. 'Yes, sir, two minutes more and you'd have found a locked door. Gee! Mr. Wilburton, that was a dandy essay of yours. It certainly was!'

'Which one do you mean?'

'The last one, sonny.'

'The one on birds?'

'Sure. The essay on birds. When I think of that first essay you wrote us, and then read this one—on birds—Gee! you've made strides!'

Charles smirked. No other word adequately describes the rapidness of his smile. 'I thought I was getting on,' he said.

'And you thought a jugful, I'll tell the world! Keep on like this, boy, and there's no telling how far you'll go. Now my advice to you is that you take another course—'

But Charles was intent on his own project. 'Mr. Mundon,' he said, interrupting, 'I've been thinking.'

'At-a-boy!' said Mr. Mundon enthusiastically.

'About my book. As you know, I want to get this book written and published as soon as possible.'

'Sure. You want to spring it on this Jane before she gets tied up to the other guy.'

'That,' agreed Charles, after a moment's pause, 'is more or

less the idea. More or less. Well, it seems to me I ought to start straight away. I've had three of my lessons now, and got through them very quickly. . . . By the way, what do you think of my short sentences ?'

'Your what, sonny ?' asked Mr. Mundon, his gaze flickering over Charles's attire.

'My short sentences—in the last essays I've been writing ?'

'Oh—in your essays !'

'Yes. It's changed my style a bit, hasn't it ?'

'Surely.'

'For the better, don't you think ?'

'You've said it ! Boy, I'm telling you, the improvement is incredible. Another course, at re-dooiced prices and——'

'Then don't you think I might start on the book ? I can take the other two lessons as I'm doing it ; take them more slowly and probably assimilate them better.'

'That's the idea.'

'Then I'll begin it.'

'Got it worked out ?'

'Yes. That's why I'm keen to start. It seems a pretty good plot to me. Original, you know. Shall I tell it you ?'

'Shoot.'

'It's about a girl who falls in love with a bounder——'

'A what ?'

'A bounder—a rotter, you know.'

'A dirt ?'

'Yes. She falls in love with this dirt, whose name is Stephen Howe, and won't have anything to do with the handsome young man who loves her.'

'He done her wrong ?'

'No. Certainly not ! Just because she loves the bounder.'

'I'm on.'

'Well, it goes on like this——'

'Like what ?'

'Like I've told you, the girl loving the bounder and having nothing to do with the young man. My book shows the rotten life of the bounder and the refined life of the young man. Then the young man gets to find out about the bounder and learns he's the leader of a gang of crooks who are engaged in trafficking drugs—cocaine, you know, and that stuff—in fact, that he's a dangerous criminal.'

'Is he, by heck!' said Mr. Mundon, shocked.

'Yes. So he gets busy following his trail and that of his associates. A dangerous gang and he has several exciting escapes. And in the end he finds out all he wants and goes back to the girl to tell her. He finds her away and learns to his horror she's gone to the church to get married to the bounder. So he goes to the church and gets there just in time. The parson, you know, is just saying, "Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?" and he shouts out in a loud voice——'

'Like heck!' suggested Mr. Mundon.

'Yes. Or something similar. What do you think of it?'

'It's a dandy plot, boy!'

'Original, don't you think?'

'Original ain't the word for it! I like that bit about the church. It's sure dramatic!'

'I thought so, too.'

'You want to let him go there by aero. There's no story goes these days without an aero in it.'

'Where's he going to land?'

'Why, let him get into a tail spin and crash in the church-yard! You want to bring in an aero crash. Then, you see, the guy steps out of the wreck . . . or better, maybe he crashes through the roof and hangs there and when the parson says, I declare these two solemn married, he shouts out, "You *don't* say!" There's action!'

'Churches have good solid roofs; also knobs and things.'

'Steeple?'

'Yes. Steeples and towers.'

'Then let the aero knock a steeple over!'

'It might, but——'

'It *does*. You've got a fine story! Action and love interest combined.'

'So you'd get on with the book now—while I'm taking the lessons?'

'Sure Mike. And—look here—you could make this guy stick on the steeple like a pinned bug, crawl down and look through the roof window and when the vicar declares them u-nited in the bonds of holy matrimony, he says, "Oh, ye-ah!" takes his automatic and bumps the bridegroom off.'

'A bit rough!'

'Well, he's sore.'

'I'll think about that. But I want it to be largely a psychological novel.'

'Well, there's psychology there—he wouldn't shoot without it. Tell you what!' Mr. Mundon looked at his watch. 'I leave this office at five prompt as a rule. It's five-thirty now. If you and me goes somewheres and has a drink together, maybe I can think out a few more stunts and a bit more psychology.' He reached for his hat and took the keys out of a drawer. 'A better idea,' he went on briskly as he bustled about, closing up the office, 'would be for this feller to get there too late. His aero arrives when the cere-mony's over. All he sees is a shower of rice and the behind of the groom getting into the automobile that's taking them for their honeymoon. Then comes some more psychology. He follows this auto dropping bombs——'

'But he'd kill the bride!'

'Sure. You want a sad ending. Happy endings are plum out of date.'

'H'm . . . I don't know. Anyhow, if we're going for a drink—and, mind you, I don't think it's a bad idea—we might as well go to the "Royal Hotel" in Dean Street. I was going there in any case to collect a bag I left. We'll take a taxi.'

(To be continued.)

THE PONIES.

DURING the strike, the ponies were brought up
 From their snug stables, some three hundred feet
 Below the surface—up the pit's main shaft
 Shot one by one into the light of day ;
 And as each stepped, bewildered, from the cage
 He stood among his fellows, shivering
 In the unaccustomed freshness of free air,
 His dim eyes dazzled by the April light.
 And then one suddenly left the huddled group,
 Lifted his muzzle, snuffed the freshness in,
 Paved the soft turf and, whinneying, started trotting
 Across the field ; and one by one his fellows
 With pricking ears each slowly followed him,
 Timidly trotting ; when the leader's trot
 Broke into a canter, then into a gallop ;
 And now the whole herd galloped at his heels
 Around the dewy meadow, hard hoofs, used
 To stumbling over treacherous stony tramways
 And plunging, hock-deep, through black steamy puddles
 Of the dusky narrow galleries, delighting
 In the soft spring of the resilient turf.
 Still round and round the field they raced, unchecked
 By tugging traces, at their heels no longer
 The trundling tubs, and round and round and round,
 With a soft thunder of hoofs, the sunshine flashing
 On their sleek coats, through the bright April weather
 They raced all day ; and even when the night
 Kindled clear stars above them in a sky
 Strangely unsullied by the stack which now
 No longer belched out blackness, still they raced,
 Unwearied, as through their short sturdy limbs
 The rebel blood like wildfire ran, their lungs
 Filled with the breath of freedom. On they sped
 Through the sweet dewy darkness ; and all night
 The watchman at the pithead heard the thudding
 Of those careering and exultant hoofs

Still circling in that crazy chase ; and dawn
 Found them still streaming raggedly around,
 Tailing into a lagging cantering,
 And so to a stumbling trot : when gradually,
 Dropping out one by one, they started cropping
 The dew-dank tender grass, which no foul reek
 From the long idle pit now smirched, and drinking
 With quivering nostrils the rich living breath
 Of sappy growing things, the cool rank green
 Grateful to eyes, familiar from their colthood
 Only with darkness and the dusty glimmer
 Of lamplit galleries . . .

Mayhap one day
 Our masters, too, will go on strike, and we
 Escape the dark and drudgery of the pit,
 And race unreined around the fields of heaven !

WILFRID GIBSON.

AFTERWARDS.

THE high, wide fields of Cotswold lie
 All bare and empty to the sky,
 The old grey walls are roughly spread,
 White clouds move slowly overhead
 And cast long shadows as they pass
 On stubble fields and pasture grass,
 While, higher still, long ridges seem
 With pale, clear sunshine all agleam.

The spirit of the height is mine—
 From savage, dark, uncharted time
 Men of my breed have walked the hill,
 Men of my breed will walk it still
 When this kind body housing me
 Is earth again, and I am free
 To tread the heights I could not climb
 When trammelled by the laws of time.

Yet, as I think, when I am dead,
Though many years pass overhead,
That soul which is most truly I
Can never to remembrance die :
And when cloud-shadows swiftly pass
Across the leagues of bowing grass
On countless hills that I once loved—
I shall not be too far removed.

When in the Spring the chestnut trees
Stretch tiny hands towards the breeze,
And rose-rimmed daisies in the field
Are sweet, though they no perfume yield—
When tenderness of Autumn eve
Bends down o'er golden corn to leave
Some whisper in the nodding ear—
Oh then, I think, I shall be near.

For the great Painter, Who designed
Such settings for His humankind,
Surely, I think, He will be glad
That I His works in honour had.
And, though I know He will unfold
New wonders for me to behold,
Yet will He let me walk again
The sunny, smiling Severn plain
And watch while noonday shadows still
Sweep by some silent Cotswold hill.

IRIS E. M. MOUSLEY.

THE RETURN: A STORY OF REALITY.

BY 'MARGARET NICHOLAS.'

SHE had returned, as it were from the dead, after seven unspeakable years—years that had robbed her of everything that makes life worth living. She dared not even look back upon them. How she had continued to exist, she knew not.

The night before departure she had not slept at all. To-morrow should give her back Gerda Gilchrist; something beyond that wrecked human being, with a name affixed to her like a label, to which she had been obliged to answer. The big Professor, her husband, had duly fetched her in the car. She had a dim consciousness of following her luggage from the ward and of kindly farewells being spoken, to which she tried to respond. The great gates opened and closed behind them. They were gone!

On the drive they had little to say to each other. Talk had always been difficult between them during these long years. She looked quietly out and along the roads at the symbols of reawakened spring. The haze of young green everywhere, the swiftly unfolding fans of the chestnuts, the oaks' young gold! They came upon a sudden sheet of bluebells in a wood. She remembered a certain spring-time of their early marriage and looked away quickly, pierced by the recollection. She said to herself under her breath more than once 'I am free'! But she still felt like a ghost, a revenant, and returning to what? That she did not know.

As they neared London she experienced a horrible nervousness. She would have liked to put a hand on his arm and ask him to reassure her. But he was entirely occupied in negotiating the traffic and didn't notice the little movement towards him. So best!

The well-remembered roads and streets flew past them. High-gate now! In a few moments they would be at home. Gerda felt herself turning pale at the ordeal that lay before her. Had she just finished a longish term of imprisonment she could not have felt more unhappy, more suppressed. She must pluck up her courage somehow. Perhaps it had been inadvisable—her steady refusal to see Judith or the children all these long years. But then, she had been so certain she would never get out!

Here they were at the well-remembered hill, the broad road, the old-fashioned houses standing back in their tree'd gardens. The car took the hill like a bird. This was the house—quite unchanged.

'Welcome home, dear!' Louis said with an odd impressive seriousness, as he helped her out. He held open the garden door for her. She walked up the path. Beyond, there seemed a flurry. They had evidently been waiting and watching for her. The front door opened, three figures stood there to receive her.

This must be Jan, who took the lead and came forward with kiss and careful greeting. Jan! but how changed! She had left him an untidy, overgrown schoolboy of fourteen. She found a young man, very tall, robust, and in face like his father. Well-brushed hair replaced the unruly mop she remembered, but there was still the same old twinkle that she knew.

Eleanor followed him slowly and more shyly. Her greeting seemed to have been prepared. A modern young creature, ultra-modern to Gerda's unaccustomed eyes. She wore a gay striped jersey and very short skirts; almost above her knees. The long mane that had once been Gerda's pride was exchanged for a smart shingle, though the old waves were there. These, her children, were grown up; entirely independent beings. Before she had left them they had still deferred to her in most things. They had been her joy, and her care.

She kissed them and they kissed her, but she could not think of a word to say to them. It was the third figure who now took command of the situation.

'Do come in,' she said, laying her hand lightly on Gerda's arm. 'We are so *very* glad to see you! Come in and have tea. I am sure you must be cold and tired. Yes! in here.'

Gerda looked at her almost with question. This—Judith? her maid, who had been with her, friend and servant, almost since she married—and that was twenty-two years! Judith now had a completely assured air. Whereas the children were noticeably seven years older, she might almost have been seven years younger, to look at her. Her dress was very like Eleanor's, the skirts rather longer. Her hair too was shingled and she wore long earrings depending from her ears. She seemed to have more colour, too, than Gerda recollected. She was certainly handsomer! Gerda would once have said: 'She reminds me very much of Judith'; never, 'This is Judith!'

Judith now took her bag from her, and a long coat, which she had forgotten to put on against the sharp spring cold. She found herself placed in an armchair, and it was Judith who sat easily in her old place at the tea-table, seeing to her wants. How strange it all was, half reality, half a nightmare! Finding she had nothing to say, in response to their efforts, Judith and the young ones, to cover her silence, began to speak of little ordinary everyday affairs. The poor ghost sat there and listened to them. These three were evidently on the best and easiest of terms. The 'children' called her 'Ju', and quite suddenly some joke was shared between them—they broke into a merry burst of laughter. It was Eleanor who first seemed to remember the onlooker.

'Mother!' The word came out strangely. 'Wouldn't you like to come up to your room now and rest?'

Louis had only stayed a few moments, partaken of a hurried cup of tea, and murmuring something about 'letter for the post' had left them.

Gerda stood up half-dazed by the complexity of her feelings. She suffered Eleanor to lead her from the room. There, on the staircase walls, were those old water-colours of Germany done by her father, and some, very like, but not as good, done by herself in her teens.

'Do you draw, or paint, Lena?' She hazarded by way of saying something.

'Only a little,' the girl answered coolly. 'You see I am on the Science side at College and that doesn't give one much time for other things.'

She was now turning a handle, and with a queer pang Gerda found herself once more in her old room. Very little there was changed. At the first glance, was anything? Yes, the wall-paper was new, and the carpet; to welcome her home they seemed to have reinstated all else, if it had ever been moved? Her pictures, her books, her knick-knacks were all there; her very work-basket and the toilet requisites in their places ready for her use. One thing she saw was quite new—a very comfortable couch with an adjustable back, at the foot of the bed.

With a word of excuse—and 'Shall I come back and unpack for you presently?' Eleanor disappeared.

Gerda was thankful to be alone. She went straight to the window and looked out. The garden lay below her; that small green space in its high walls, once so dearly beloved. What rest

she had once derived from the sight of it, what dreams and inspirations! It had seemed like a scrap of the country almost within sight of London. It was so exactly the same, a gay dash of colour; spring flowers coming out in the borders and the pink and white of the apple and pear trees coming to their full bloom. It was all so bewildering after the long, dead years. She whispered 'Home' as if it were either a chimera, or a magic word, the very sound of it bound to achieve something. Her eyes filled with tears.

Her suit-case was already there. She would unpack it herself. She was shy of letting Eleanor see how meagre its contents. Having done so, she lay down for a little on the couch and found herself listening for something. Yes! for the sound of the church clock in the road below striking six. She rose hastily and found her scissors and sat at the end of the couch, holding them in her hand. Waiting!

Nobody came for them; that roused her to recollection! With an almost guilty air, she put them back again. Lucky, no one had been there to see her. How careful she must be not to give herself away in little things! No 'round' to-night at half-past six either. That in itself should have been an immense relief and comfort.

Shortly before dinner Eleanor came back to her. She had exchanged her jumper and skirt for some slip of a semi-evening frock; primrose-coloured and becoming to her young fairness.

She tried to seem at ease. 'Can I get anything out for you, Mother? There are some of your old dresses in this wardrobe, one or two you used to wear in the evenings. Will you have one of these till you can get some new ones?' She was unhooking one as she spoke.

Gerda found herself arrayed in an old black silk, with touches of jade green, that she had left behind her seven years ago. That at any rate had belonged to the real Gerda. It might help to give her confidence in herself now. She went down to find her seat at the dinner-table had been placed at her husband's right hand. She looked at him askance, and hesitated before she took it, but he appeared to notice nothing wrong. Judith sat in her own chair at the end of the table, saying casually;

'I always carve for the family. You know how the Professor hated it, and I was sure you wouldn't feel up to carving to-night, would you, as you've only just come home?'

She, too, was in some semi-evening frock of a silvery grey,

only a washing material; and she wore a rope of long green beads that suited her well. It all seemed so natural to them, so hideously unnatural to Gerda. For one wild moment she almost wished herself back—*there*!

Conversation seemed to come with effort and flagged again. Gerda felt herself a sort of kill-joy at their meal. Louis made valiant efforts to help entertain her, though the while he fingered his evening post.

'Please *do* read your letters,' she commanded, with a sudden spurt of the old Gerda. He obeyed. She tried to interest herself in what the others were saying, but she was so overtired and it all seemed so puzzling and difficult. The world had gone on and they with it. She alone had stayed behind and lost touch.

After dinner things were no better even when Judith disappeared for a time.

'Does she always manage alone?' asked Gerda.

'No, sometimes I help her.'

Eleanor lit a cigarette. 'But I told her I shouldn't to-night.'

They both tried to think of an easy topic of conversation, but fruitlessly. Jan filled up an interval by fetching his books and showing Gerda his snapshots. She was at least able to question him about the places. The photographs did not last long enough, however.

'Perhaps you'd like to read a little if you're tired,' suggested Eleanor. 'Here's a book everyone is reading. A bit sordid of course, but very clever. Quite a young new writer.'

Gerda thankfully took the volume and pretended to bury herself in it, though, for all she knew of the contents afterwards, she might have been reading it upside down.

At ten her husband reappeared; very big and bluff and kindly. 'My dear, you must be tired; the children should have sent you off earlier.'

They all rose; she kissed them somewhat awkwardly and went off with him, still holding the book. Eleanor looked after it disappointedly; she had been counting on absorbing it in bed.

Louis and Gerda now stood together in that room of many and mixed memories—and a last one, most poignant of all!

He felt safety lay only in the commonplace. Having turned on the light, 'I do hope they've remembered to put everything you want ready. If not, I am only in the dressing-room. Come

along and tell me. They've put a hot bottle in your bed. I think and trust you'll sleep well to-night. You ought.'

He kissed her somewhat perfunctorily; but, when she would have clung to him in an uprush of strange and forlorn emotion, she found him already gone.

Once in her own bed she could hardly believe it. Had she really attained that haven of rest, at last? Yet, to-night, it held little consolation for her.

As they had been that evening, she saw them, in retrospect. Louis—more preoccupied by his work than ever. The Professor—the well-known Historian—remaking History for the world and himself. Jan and Eleanor—young hopeful eager students, ardent life before them and no canker-worm of hidden, insidious dread. Judith—the thought of Judith oppressed her as some dark menacing shadow. The old Judith had been both maid and comrade. This new Judith, somehow—she feared.

Next morning, disappointment continued. After breakfast husband and children went off to College. Gerda was alone with Judith. It seemed useless to struggle for her place as mistress. She offered to help in the housework instead. Judith, vital, energetic, arrayed in an overall, accepted at once.

'You can dust the drawing-room if you will, Mrs. Gilchrist.'

Gerda entered it with a duster. All these things had once been hers and everything was reminiscent. Here was the tall, green pottery vase she had bought, and loved to fill with daffodils; filled now, and by other hands. Pent-up emotion must have made her hand unsteady. The duster caught in a tall, delicate, iridescent glass she and Louis had once brought from Venice. It lay now, shivered, on the ground. Hearing the crash, Judith ran in.

'Oh, Judith! I am so sorry; I don't know how it happened. My duster caught in it, somehow.' Just as if Judith had to be placated. Seven years ago she would have said, 'Look what has happened—my poor vase and I can't replace it.' Expecting instant sympathy, which she would have had.

At the remembrance, a dark flush mounted to her forehead. She turned away her head to hide her mortification.

Judith too loved the glass, but just managed to control her vexation.

'Oh, never mind! Of course you couldn't help it. Come out with me to shop and we'll forget it.'

Gerda obediently went up to dress, but for her the beauty of the May morning had vanished.

She and Judith went to several provision shops, Judith speaking briskly of prices and economies. No reference whatever to Gerda's wishes in buying. So she looked idly at the windows whilst Judith went in. Coming home, it did occur to Judith to say something. She hoped it was convincing. 'We think it best we should all continue for a bit as we have been doing. You must be tired and unaccustomed now and it will take a little getting back into the swim of things!'

Always that harping on the word 'tired.' She was, to death, but why should she be, when she had done nothing for years? Yet, she had no choice but to acquiesce: just as she had acquiesced in everything she disliked most intensely—*there!*

Sitting alone in her room before lunch, Judith busy in the kitchen, it occurred to Gerda that a renewed sympathy with her husband might straighten life for her. Then, when he noticed her anomalous position, she could surely appeal to him to help her! Yet how difficult that seemed, when his real life lay in the work that absorbed him. And she felt totally unable to interest herself in the knowledge and ideas that once they had shared, so happily, together.

In the early evening, the young folk brought a few friends home with them. Judith, who was on easy terms with all, had evidently been forewarned and had prepared an especially nice little supper.

Gerda herself had been introduced by Eleanor. 'My Mother.' Then there had seemed a sudden burst of talk all round, to cover any possible awkwardness. After supper the young ones gathered round the piano. One tall, dark girl sang and accompanied herself. She was training at the College of Music and she sang delightfully. It was a graceful song and her voice made one think of a bird at dawn, calling to the exquisite beauty of a spring morning. Gerda, sitting shrinkingly in the shadow of a curtain, experienced the first sense of real pleasure she had known for years. The singer was somehow different to the others. She was an artist, and more. Her song finished, she came naturally and sat by Gerda, withdrawn rather apart from the others. And, with the gift of a rare sympathy, she not only talked, but drew the other out.

Presently they were speaking quite easily of the Alps in June. Janet had been there for her holiday last year. She hoped to go

again? How lovely the Alps in June—Yes! with the freshness of that song! When they parted, they looked deep into each other's eyes. These two had understood each other.

This was but a temporary gleam. The days passed, and Gerda knew her position in the house no better. She ought to speak to Judith, to represent she had come back as wife, mother, mistress—not as guest. She ought to assert herself, prove that she could assume the reins successfully. Yet all the time, she knew she could not. The words she burned to say to her husband and Judith were, 'Reinstate me in my place! Now I am home *give me my chance!*' But how could she say them? What the result if she did? The thought of a scene of any sort made her feel physically ill. She shrank from it.

She had often felt ill of late but—there—one learnt to endure in silence. If one complained it would probably have been classed with 'delusions.' So one didn't.

The most difficult thing about the family was, they all, outwardly, appeared supremely unconscious that she wasn't satisfied. They combined to treat her as an invalid in the convalescent stage, not to be called upon in the management of affairs. Of course she could offer to do things to help, and she did, and finished her tasks.

One day she surreptitiously snatched up the keys and peeped into her once-beloved linen cupboard. Her view made her want to say quite a lot about it to Judith. And she dared not.

Another evening she said timidly to her husband, 'If you are not too busy, may I come and sit in the library with you, and have a talk?'

'Of course.' He looked at her so kindly, and held out his hand, so that she wondered as she followed him thither, would she manage to unburden her troubles to him? Instead, they sat and spoke only of the book he was writing, and she knew he was trying to talk with her as he would have, eight or nine years ago. She did her very best to be interested, to show all intelligence. Her heart felt queer, her head ached badly. And so, the precious opportunity passed.

A few days later, Eleanor came in suddenly, earlier than they had expected. Gerda, who felt these blank years had made her obtuse, was instantly aware that, modern and self-contained as Eleanor was, something had gone seriously amiss.

Her old mother-love broke bounds and instantly unsealed her

lips. 'Eleanor! You are worried about something. I know it. If you tell me, can't I help you?' she said huskily.

Eleanor looked at her like a startled fawn. This was a stranger—kind but interfering.

'No, Mother dear. It's my *own* affair. I've been a fool, that's all. Please leave me. It'll mend.'

Gerda, feeling as if she had been struck, so tremendous had been the impulse to help, turned and went, blindly.

It did not help matters that a short while after she heard Judith's footstep ascending the stairs; going along the passage Judith went into Eleanor's room, naturally, and there, equally naturally, she fulfilled the rôle that should have been the mother's own. It was plain Gerda could have no real part or lot in her children's lives. That belonged to others. She meekly bowed her head on her clasped hands, in a pain too deep for tears.

It was not long after this that husband, children, and even Judith began to be painfully conscious that something was definitely wrong with Gerda. Yet how could they help it? They had done the best they knew. It was Judith to whom the others turned for everything, she who, well balanced, discreet, kind, had made home for them during the past seven years. In spite of the shadow on 'Mother' what a happy home it had been! Hard work; fun and laughter, untrammelled youth—holidays. All such fun. And now the shadow threatened to become black substance. Jan and Eleanor felt hardly treated. Why more trouble through Mother's advent, when they had so firmly determined to help her put things right?

One night, Eleanor, pyjama-clad, seated on the edge of her bed, put the matter thus, to Judith: 'It's rather like suddenly having some poor wild animal put into a busy farm-yard, isn't it? What could you do for a fish if you didn't know how it really felt?'

That was the crux. How did she really feel? After seven unnatural years, which one could hardly imagine, not having tried it, how would *anyone* feel?

Judith could contribute no answer to such a question, and therefore sat silent. She was beginning to have her own private qualms on the subject. How would *she* have felt had she returned to find maid and friend turned into mistress? Yet, if she slackened the reins, or abdicated and left, the home would go to pieces without her.

So they each, and in their own way, merely tried to be still

kinder to Gerda. That was all. They pitied her. She could read it in their faces and the knowledge was bitter almost beyond bearing. It should have comforted her, but it could not.

One evening—it was nearly the end of May now—she found herself alone in her room with her husband. He had been speaking with peculiar gentleness. Suddenly, he saw her face reflected in the glass, so etherealised somehow as to have assumed an almost wistful look. The features appeared more delicate, the great grey eyes seemed bigger than ever, and wore an almost intolerably patient expression.

'You're not well, Gerda.' He took her hands and looked hard at her. 'You've grown so thin you're not better for being home with us, and we'd all been so counting on it.' Was that true? He wondered even as he said it? 'Tell me what is the matter, dear. I am sure you must see a doctor. Perhaps a change to the sea would do you good. What do you think of that? You know we do the very best we can for you, don't you?'

That was it: they did their very best—all of them—so palpably!

She drew her breath quickly. Now he was giving her her chance; she must take it.

She sank on to the couch, clasped her hands nervously, and the words began to flow in a torrent.

'Can the dead come back to life?' she said. 'You see that's what I am, a ghost, not a woman! I can't be your wife. . . . In just material things, Judith is that. You turn to her for everything, give her orders and messages, leave everything in her hands. *She's the wife.*'

She paused, gasped, and quickly continued: 'It's the same with the children! They are kind, desperately kind, as one might be to a stranger. They take me out with them now, break through their shyness and try to tell me of their doings. It's that kindness of you all that is breaking my heart! You say, "See a doctor." What can a doctor do, no more than—*there!* He can't cure a broken heart, can he?'

She stopped and looked up at him; fearful, when she thought of all she had said. For once she had spoken the truth. And to what purpose?

He stood there before her, petrified by this unexpected revelation. He knew it was undeniable fact. He knew it. Yet, what could he do? Home seemed to be shattering before him. What could he do? One sole idea presented itself out of the chaos.

Mad, if she accepted; yet he must voice it at all costs. He divined she had had years of daily dreadfulness to bring her to this—ages, from which time and he alone had rescued her.

All anger vanished when he thought of those pitiful years. She was his wife. He remembered all that she had been before the tragedy happened. Loving, happy and now, how completely changed. He sat heavily down on the couch beside her, and gently drew her hands from her face. Twilight was falling in the room. Through the open window came faintly the scent of early pinks and stocks, sun-warmed all the day long.

‘Gerda!’ He spoke slowly. ‘Do you mean you want Judith to go?’

That was just what she did mean. With Judith gone and a little courage to support her, could she not reassume her old place? She had watched how Judith did it. Unobtrusively, quietly yet firmly, half because it was her duty, and half her pleasure. She made them all happy and at home. So, Judith gone, if they would all help her, she could easily slip back into her own rightful position and do what Judith had done. The temptation to accept was tremendous. Under his quiet exterior Louis must still love her greatly, or he would never have proposed this at all.

If she accepted? A vision floated! She might regain everything she had lost. She laid her weary head back against his shoulder. She nearly whispered: ‘Yes, that’s it, the *one* way out!’ Then with a sudden and blinding illumination she knew it was *not* the way out. It was only the deeper way in.

If Judith went, she could not reassume the reins of government. She could not run the house successfully, and fulfil all its daily quiet needs as Judith had done. Who would help entertain the friends both of husband and of children as Judith could and did? And these were minor things. She had spoken of herself exactly. A ghost, a revenant. Only ghosts were not exacting and she was.

She turned to her husband and looked at him, realisation and self-sacrifice dawning in her eyes.

In spite of all; though they no longer really needed her, she still loved them, deeply, changelessly. She, who all these long years had thought love cold and dead; in this supreme moment found it all again. And it was living. So in Love’s Self, in the spirit, though not in deed, she was wife, mother, and even mistress—still! This was the most and the last she could do for them, the learning to give up.

A curious simplicity tinged her utterance when she spoke to him again.

'No! Judith must *not* go!' she said slowly. 'She does everything for you all. She is good in her way, and kind, and unselfish. The children love her and trust her. Being what she is, she helps you to do your work also, because she smooths the way of little things. That's the *real* truth! It must all go on as it is. I expect I am depressed, because I am weak. I'll be better and be able to do more for you all—presently. Perhaps I haven't tried enough.'

She attempted to smile at him. His thankfulness was beyond words. To tell Judith she must go would have seemed the end of all things. Judith and comfort gone, surely he would never have written one of his histories again.

'Oh, Gerda! I am glad you realise we can't change. As you get stronger and more able, you will find Judith ready to hand more over to you. I'll do all I can. Perhaps you would prefer your old seat at table and the tea tray? But she *did* offer that, didn't she? Well, I'll speak to her.'

'Don't,' said Gerda. 'Let things come right of themselves. It's just having patience, is it not, especially with me? But you can't know, you will never guess . . .' She broke off, unable to go further. They kissed each other, slowly, clingingly; she derelict, and feeling the greater need of him thereby. He was moved by a profound compassion for her; wishing he could undo the past—make the future smoother. But he knew, even at the cost of his own and the children's peace, that he could do very little towards it.

Next day, Gerda fancied he must have communicated something of their conversation to the others, though with big reservations. The mental atmosphere seemed somehow clearer. Rather like a still shining after rain. Eleanor made yet more overtures, Gerda accepting gratefully. She stood beside Eleanor, invited to her little room. It was full of girlish personality, extravagancies—whimsicality. It so reminded her, in some things, of the room of her own early girlhood, that she almost smiled.

'Mother, I'm going to let you into a great secret if you'll promise to tell nobody? If so—look!'

Eleanor laughed softly, as she opened her desk and took from it a sheaf of papers, typewritten. These she thrust into Gerda's hands.

'The night you came home you asked me—did I paint? I said no, not much! But I *do* paint, not with brushes, but with words on paper. See! And I publish, quite a lot, one way and another, but not in my own name, of course!'

Gerda took the proffered sheets. Such a lump in her throat that for a moment she could say nothing. These were the sacred emblems of Eleanor's inmost thoughts and dreams. Surely this was attaining her lost motherhood indeed! Who would have imagined it of Eleanor, who always seemed so crisp, so very much on the spot. Some of the verses were lovely, deep or quaint; individual thoughts, individually expressed.

'Eleanor, they are beautiful. I don't wonder you get them published! I like this one especially of Holland. Were you really there in the spring?'

She was half afraid to say more to this shy daughter. It was almost like frightening away a timid bird. Yet, when they went down to dinner together, Gerda's hand was on Eleanor's shoulder with no fear of a tiny shrug to shake it off.

Jan too began to speak to her of his College friends. They laughed merrily over some of his holiday escapades and adventures. Especially those during a summer holiday alone in Germany.

Having thought she had lost all, Gerda seemed suddenly, inexplicably, coming into the kingdom of her children.

And Judith too was trying to push matters back into her hands. No trenchant changes, only in little things. Would Gerda like to take over the linen cupboard, again? 'The July sales would soon be on, they might go out and buy new linen together.'

Yet the great difficulty still ached at Gerda's heart, at times. She could never take her true place in the household any more. What she had, they gave her, out of kindness and compassion. This held a deep, unconquerable sadness.

One evening, tired beyond words, uncomplaining as ever, Gerda said she would go to her own room to rest. This night, Louis was expecting a few friends—just intimate ones of his own kind to dinner. Gerda carefully placed her new evening dress on the bed. Took out of her jewel-case the moonstone necklace Louis had, long ago, given her.

Before she dressed she must rest first, to try and take her place in the conversation during the meal, and thus please him.

That sense of deadly fatigue, which had become so frequent now, almost invariably engendered a feeling of extreme loneliness.

It reminded her of the days when nothing that happened to her mattered, because she had lost her sphere, and her true personality. She had almost ceased to worry about herself. So, to-night.

She sought her couch, and as she lay there, forlorn and exhausted, suddenly, a wonderful peace began to envelop her. It was indescribable. She had never felt anything like it before. It seemed to well from some deep inner fount of Being, apart from her, yet intimately connected with her.

As it enfolded her more closely, the problems, the sorrows, the despairs of her short while at home, became as nothing to her. This transcended everything.

'The Peace of God!' She found herself murmuring the words aloud as a possible solution of the mystery. The only one!

She glanced down at her wedding-ring; symbol once of wifehood, motherhood—mistress of the home.

Now, almost nothing. And it did not matter.

There was something so much bigger. *That*—mattered.

Gerda laid her thin cheek on her thinner hand. Her head fell back upon the cushions. Her fingers pulled up the old plaid shawl, the very plaid that her husband had given her on her honeymoon, so long ago.

Perhaps, if she lay very still, the peace might continue to grow deeper and deeper?

How strange her heart felt! How slowly it was beating! But why trouble about it in the midst of this. It could not, should not, worry her. She lay so still that the sudden, sharp ringing of the dinner-bell failed to disturb her. Neither did she hear a soft knock at the door, nor an anxious voice calling to her 'Mother!'

Silence! Then steps descending the stairs, and soon, more steps, ascending.

And so, they found her—asleep in this world, awake in some other.

POOLS IN A DARTMOOR GARDEN.

BY G. B. GOOCH.

AN old granite boulder, lichen-clad and weather-worn, often beckons to us on hot afternoons in early spring, and we yield, knowing well what it has to offer. For, seated on its rugged form, one gazes down into a pool of miraculous clearness, carpeted with a luxuriant growth of rush seedlings, bright red on the pond bottom, vivid green where in places they spike the surface. The clear depths enhance the brilliance of the sun's rays, giving to every submerged leaf, stone or creature something of the prominence and minuteness of detail to be found in the miniature scenes encased in the glass paper-weights of the Victorians. But whereas these seem to glare at one as though each were the baleful eye of a malicious Polyphemus, the pond is curiously remote and impersonal. To watch a little bird is, often, to experience a sense of friendship and participation, for birds and man are of one world, breathing the same air, sheltering from the same showers, rejoicing in the same sunshine. But to gaze into a pond is to look on at another world.

The old stone, therefore, offers much more than a temporary seat. It takes care of our bodies, albeit in Spartan fashion, while our attention is directed to the pond whose quiet surface is smashed into a confusion of ever-widening circles by a shoal of minnows startled at our approach. As though to refute remarks about another world, they had been enjoying the sun's warmth. Tadpoles in hundreds blackened the shallow places which held the warmest water, making a distinct sound as scores and scores of little mouths broke the surface at the same moment to fill twice as many tiny lungs with the life-giving air which is not, they in their turn maintain, for birds and man alone. A long-legged pond skater, tripping daintily across the surface, climbs on to a floating grass stalk to rest and bask. If a shower sends us helter-skelter to the house, this insect would race us in its scamper for shelter.

At first glance, perhaps, not so very different a world from our own. But the glance was at the surface only, where, quite naturally, life in a pond is to a considerable extent influenced by the changing

conditions of our own world. It is necessary to look a little deeper before it is possible to look on, as from another planet, at the ways of the water-folk and their water-babies. Before doing this, however, a second glance at the surface, this time a little closer, will show that even here there is much that is strange. A sheet of water is comparable to a looking-glass, not in the sense that it portrays those who peer into it, but in its function of a peep-hole or reading-glass. And to some inhabitants of ponds or lakes, it is almost as tangible as a piece of glass, its 'surface film' being as solid a matter to them as to us is the ground upon which we tread. Everyone who has filled a tumbler so full of water that it actually stands up a little way above the rim, will realise something of the nature, strength and elasticity of this apparent film. In common with an actual sheet of glass exposed to the elements, this looking-glass requires cleaning. This is performed partly by the wind, which blows floating debris to the shore, and partly by the fish which snap up anything edible. A host of minor scavengers, themselves insects, cruise about the surface or, in sheltered places, lie in wait for a wreck, usually a small moth or some other insect. A final 'polish' is administered by several species of snail which, turning the 'foot' into a temporary boat, glide along back downwards. When in their wanderings they approach the shore, it is easy to watch the way in which minute particles of organic matter, spread across the pond in a fine dust, are removed by the slow but regular action of the snail's jaws. It is curious to think of a snail at the mercy of a puff of wind, yet of course those that hollow their single broad crawling surface to form a shallow boat are liable, in common with boats of our own making, to be swept this way and that according to the vagaries of a fickle breeze. Equally, they are liable to be swamped and sunk! This, however, is scarcely an inconvenience to an aquatic snail, for it will continue its interrupted meal on the pond bottom or amongst any vegetation which has intercepted its sudden descent into the depths.

Surface scavenging, however, is really only a side-line with pond snails, originating no doubt from their periodical ascents to breathe the air which to the majority is a necessity. Of professional scavengers, two commonly demonstrate the advantage taken by insects of the surface film. The pond skater walks upon the water without wetting its feet, running out to make a meal of any small terrestrial insect that may have come to grief. On one occasion I watched a skater making prodigious leaps upwards towards a low-flying moth

which, if not about to fall foul of the water on its own account, seemed in much danger of being dragged down on to it by the voracious insect below. Actually, the moth managed to reach the farther shore of the little pond in safety, having shown me that in all probability *Gerris* is a hunter at heart, a scavenger by force of circumstance. The diagnostic features of this curious creature are the long slender legs, which rest on the water at such a gentle angle that it can trip across the surface without piercing the film. Once, however, I did see a skater with a leg dangling into the depths. After trying for a moment or two to regain its accustomed foothold, the insect raised the offending member high in the air, maintaining its balance by resting the tip of its 'tail' on the water. Many minutes were spent in drying out the leg, which was also constantly brushed by the first pair of limbs, which are prehensile. No doubt in this way the hairs that clothe the long 'skating legs' were smoothed out and combed back into their normal positions after the ruffling effect of the immersion. Eventually the foot was placed on the surface, rather tentatively at first, I thought, and once again the insect was prepared to walk dry-shod upon the water. It is a constant source of wonder that accidents of this kind are not of almost daily occurrence, at least when a pair join in the maddest of springtime dances, when—for they move so quickly—one cannot help thinking that they actually achieve the impossible and pirouette in couples on the surface film!

Anything from two or three to a dozen pond skaters are usually to be found on the small pond. Another pond, of larger size, was at a certain stage of its development the playground and workshop of perhaps a hundred whirligig beetles. There they whirled in the giddy curves that give them their name, there they earned their daily bread. In fine weather they occupied an area of several square feet, in wet they bunched together, embossing the surface with a living design of glistening steely-black bodies, each one of which moved slowly amongst its neighbours as though every little beetle had lost and was for ever seeking a friend amongst a crowd of unknown faces. Now they are gone, for the fish we introduced eat not only all the food provided but any small insect falling upon the water. Starved out, they have flown to pastures new. It was a case of 'fish-pond' or 'beetle-rink,' and we chose the former, not, however, without often missing our jolly band of live steel studs.

Unless anything of particular interest is happening on the sur-

face of the little pond, the peculiar curves of that old granite boulder soon suggest that much might be gained by taking to the grass at the water's edge. There, too, it is easier to investigate certain suspicious movements on the pond bottom which, viewed from this lower elevation, resolve themselves into a female palmate newt pushing her way through the spiky stems of the submerged rushes. Evidently her placid, somewhat bovine expression and fat brown body are a source of much attraction to a couple of rival males who dog her footsteps. Exactly how each hopes to prove his superiority over the other in this jungle of weed it is difficult to make out, but perhaps it is simply a case of keeping the female in sight until an opportunity arises. Indeed, directly the trio emerge into a clearing the tactics of one suitor immediately change. A few strokes of his fine tail bring the pair neck to neck. Touching her lips with his, he snatches what must be in effect an aquatic kiss, though it looks as if it is done simply to attract her attention. For with a light spring sideways, the male then goes through a performance calculated to interest anyone, let alone an eligible young female of his own species. Curving forward his tail, which ends in a filamentous spear-point, he vibrates and lashes it against his side, staring the while with an absurd concentration at the face of his beloved, as though searching for some encouraging change of expression. Again she is kissed (or nudged), again a frenzy of passion sweeps over the little male, but she remains unmoved. Now the second male is displaying his charms on the other side, the female walking slowly forward as though seeing neither. That is as it appears to an observer from above. Seen from the pond bottom the gaily coloured little creature, with crest aquiver and lashing tail, bright eyes and webbed hind feet apparently encased in black velvet gloves, must seem a veritable dragon in miniature. Seen through the eyes of a female newt, one or other of these rival fairy monsters must, one would think, in time appear more desirable than the other, and be chosen to lead away the lady of his undoubted choice. Anyone watching the little fellows' efforts to seem pleasing in the eyes of their lady cannot but assume that sooner or later one will be triumphant, the other retire vanquished if not in actual fact crestfallen—unless, indeed, one is acquainted with the astounding way of a man newt with an eft maid. In frogs and toads there is normal pairing, though the eggs are not rendered fertile until they are laid. In the case of newts the eggs are fertilised by the female herself before they are laid by means of small 'packets' left on the floor of the pond by

the male. The biological aim and object, then, of the male's almost frenzied excitement is simply to induce the female to pick up his unconsidered trifles, which she usually does with her hind feet, just as later in the same way she takes each egg and tries to press and glue it to the leaf of a submerged plant.

Though the newt is a terrestrial creature during the greater part of its life, resorting to water only in the breeding-season, its courtship and marriage are such that in utter strangeness it vies with the permanently aquatic creatures, beating them at their own game of other-worldliness. An electric torch flashed into a pond at night will throw into startling relief newts, frogs and toads. The sudden transition from inky blackness to vision and then again to the darkness of the night will fix on the mind an indelible picture, for what has been seen will resemble a vision indeed, if the pond is the breeding-haunt of the fairy dragons of the water world. Arrested in every conceivable attitude amongst the weeds, their dainty bodies set off against the ponderous bulk of toads, the newts give one the impression of a world, not asleep, but petrified, though this does injustice to the scene which is, rather, one of jewels and rare metals in a setting of luxurious foliage.

Even those solemn old toads have the strangest of ways. Few creatures indeed can have more fantastic table-manners, for when swallowing a morsel they close one eye or both, not in ecstasy, as might be supposed, but simply because one or both eyes are required to stay the wriggings of beetle or worm! At each gulp in the swallowing of a large worm both eyeballs descend through the roof of the mouth and help to force the unwilling victim backwards down the throat! The toad, then, has not only eyes that see but eyes that actually grip and, surely, eyes that are beautiful enough to have given rise to the fairy-tale concerning the jewel in the despised creature's head. Though toads at first sight are as alike as sheep to all save their shepherd, it does not need a very close acquaintance with them to realise that they differ from one another at least as much as man from man. Of our common species, some are really ugly, the majority plain, some few pretty and the rest I can describe only as seeming to me truly beautiful. But to decide to which category an individual belongs, it is probably necessary to esteem these pleasant little people as highly as the familiar robin or song-thrush of our gardens.

Although the humblest aquatic creatures are in many ways the most interesting, the fish are undoubtedly the aristocracy of the

water world. A garden pond without fish indeed seems scarcely a pond at all. Though the coloured varieties are out of place in some ponds, vivid red or pale salmon striking a discordant note in a setting of grey, brown and green, it is difficult to resist their charm in a garden pool surrounded by cultivated flowers. There, indeed, they provide a pleasant link between the artificial and the natural, between the flowers at the water's edge and the wild life of surface film or pond bottom. There is such a fatal association between goldfish and the bare cement basins of public gardens, that even now I am amazed by the exquisite riot of colour produced by ours when, basking in the spring sunshine, they mingle deepest red with the reflections of forget-me-nots and the overhanging branches of larch-trees clothed in all the glory of their fresh green foliage. Other parts of the garden may contain flowers more beautiful, but at the pond edge the most insignificant little blossom glows with a new glory, as though the very flowers are startled from vegetation into life in that scene of animation inseparable from the sound of splashing water and the sight of beautifully coloured fish breaking the surface as they leap neck to neck and shoulder to shoulder after a handful of crumbs. Our largest pond, one-time playground of whirligig beetles, is now inhabited by a shoal of golden orfe and golden rudd. During intervals of sunshine, sometimes rare on our misty uplands, it is only necessary to look at these and such flowers as are in bloom, to imagine oneself in a land of perpetual sunshine. Until a burst of rain sweeps down from the moor, it is hard to believe that this scene of almost tropical colour is in fact in a land of mists and rainbows. It is for this very reason, perhaps, that the salmon-pink and the silver flashing sides of the orfe contrast so strongly with the blood-red fins of their companions. Fish, flowers, ripples and reflections light up a garden as a sunset takes the soft grey-green of England's loveliness and sets it aflame.

The surface-feeding fish are the swifts and swallows of the watery world. They swim, while the birds circle overhead, for hours on end simply because in perfect movement they find life itself. And life as lived by a bird is life at a far higher level of intensity than a slow-footed earth-bound mortal can ever hope to achieve for more than a few minutes at a time with his clothes, his cares, and his conventions. No wonder that we sometimes long for the wings of a bird! Yet in some ways the life of a fish is as thrilling to contemplate, for a fish in the sea may be as high above the earth's hard crust as a bird in the air, but while the bird descends to rest, the

fish can keep its distance practically for all time. In this sense a fish is the equivalent of a bird whose whole life is spent on the wing. Even in a small pond the lives of fish seem not unattractive, especially when in hot weather they float idly beneath water-lily leaves while we who creep upon the earth's hot surface are scorched by the sun's rays and do not find even in the shade the coolness we seek. They luxuriate while panting mother birds spread wings to save their little ones from sunstroke. At the other extreme, when our world is frost-bound and the earth so iron-hard that a large amount of bird food is killed, in hiding or sealed down as in a tin that none can open, the fish in a pond find an equable temperature beneath the ice, caring (supposing a fish could reason) neither how hard it freezes nor how long. While on many days of the year, when the sun is hot but a cutting wind sets a premium on sheltered sunny places, almost any fish in almost any pond has only to rest close to the surface of the water to enjoy that which many creatures fur-clad or feathered seek but cannot find.

Experience has taught us that it is wise to look before we leap, yet fish, in common with many animals, though imbued with the same instinct of self-preservation, would hold that the first and most elementary rule of conduct is to leap before you look. This inversion of a familiar maxim is necessary in contrasting our habits with those of other animals, simply because life in field, wood or pond is carried on at such speed that were an animal to stop to investigate a suspicious sound or movement close at hand, the chances are that it would not put to full advantage that epoch-making fraction of a second in which it has to choose between the upward and forward path of life and the blind alley of death. Time enough to look *after* you have leapt to safety, I can imagine our minnows remarking. For we are no sooner seated on the old rock by the little pond than the panic, which spread among the minnow masses at our approach, subsides, and a multitude of little fish scurry about at our feet to await the crumbs that experience has taught them are forthcoming.

When a hand descends through the water holding a small piece of bread, the excitement becomes acute. Two or three bold spirits dash out from the crowd and seizing the bread tear off large mouthfuls with which they retreat to the far corners of the pond, fortunate indeed if no more than a couple of their fellows are hot on their tails, drawn irresistibly by the swiftly moving crumbs gleaming white in the underwater world. Usually the meal has such a hearty re-

ception that the first few mouthfuls scatter breadcrumbs far and wide, and this initiates activity too frenzied to describe, for such a sprinkling of food serves only to whet appetites already keen, and to spur on to deeds of daring little bodies bursting with health and strength. The whole mass try to get at the bread at once, so that practically at no time is any of it visible. Every now and then a full-grown adult, with a fine disregard for manners, shoulders its way into the fringe of fish, scattering them right and left for all their inch and a half's length, and tears off a mouthful to be consumed in leisurely fashion on the outskirts of the jostling band. Many explore one's hand, pushing their way, on their sides if need be, between fingers, while quite a procession passes backwards and forwards in the large space provided between the thumb and forefinger holding the bread. Others swim up the back of one's hand, taking hold of it in their mouths as though finding something good to eat. A large minnow catching hold of the loose skin over one's knuckles can administer a tug of surprising strength. On one occasion, when I was holding the bread, a minnow used the back of my hand to rub its side, the other flashing silver as for an instant it was turned uppermost.

Such tameness is not remarkable once the little fish have learned to associate one's approach with a meal. In fact, the very first time I offered them food from my fingers, the whole pondful bore down on my hand and tore at the bread as though this was their usual custom. Yet tameness, which here means simply the cessation (apart from the initial dash) of their old habit of fleeing from a man as from the devil, is not invariably bound up with food. In a third pond, a backwater to the stream that flows close to our windows, I put a dozen half-grown minnows one September. Taken from a neighbouring stream where usually they appeared as dark streaks plunging into a smoke-screen of mud, they were shy indeed. For six months nothing was seen of them, except at night by flash-light. They ate a little food we left them, but from previous experience I took their behaviour to mean that the pond provided ample for their needs, which in turn meant that they had little cause to reverse their normal reaction at our approach. Then in April six small trout, little more than twice the size of the minnows, were put into the pond. These were born and reared on a trout farm and were accustomed to being fed several times a day. They were therefore quite unshy. But the pond was teeming with tadpoles on which the new-comers began at once to feed to such an

extent that they would not look at anything we threw them. The result, which might have been foreseen, was that by the end of a week their association of human beings with food had almost lapsed—in short they rapidly became shy and difficult to watch. The minnows, however, on seeing their larger companions swimming boldly in and out of their hiding-place, soon followed suit, so that, within a few hours of the introduction of the trout, I was feeding a few of the minnows in the most open part of a pool in which, hitherto, I had scarcely been able to see them at all.

When I realised that the trout were rapidly becoming shy, I much wondered whether the minnows, having already followed them into the open, would now retreat with them at our approach, and feared that this might be the case. However, when the trout were scarcely to be seen, save from a distance, the minnows continued to spend all day and every day entirely visible, ignoring our presence to the extent of never taking cover and practically never eating the food we brought them. The onslaught of six amazing appetites, aided and abetted by the minnows, soon exhausted the natural food supply, but, just as the trout were beginning to put in an appearance at meal-times, an otter in the night removed two of their number and churned up the pond bottom in an attempt to get the rest from their rocky fastnesses. This considerably checked their return to visibility. Yet the minnows were utterly unmoved by the disturbance. With numbers undepleted, they continued on view as though to them it is a case of otters may come and otters may go so far as the world of minnows is concerned. Yet one would expect that such a large beast in such a small pond must inevitably frighten every single fish. Within a month the remaining trout were taken in the same way, again without any perceptible effect on the minnows, psychological or—worse still—numerical. Nor did we have the pleasure of watching that particular marauder, which was perhaps just as well, for what would have been the result of my conflicting desires to watch the otter and save the fish, I do not know! Indeed, the only aquatic mammalian visitor we have seen is a solitary water shrew which promised well and then disappeared. It spent its time apparently collecting something from among flag iris roots in a foot of water, from which it emerged on to a rock as though propelled by a spring. Sometimes, just before entering the water again, it would hesitate for a barely perceptible space of time, but as it worked in deep shade this was scarcely more than sufficient to identify the species—not that there was

much trouble about that under the circumstances. Seven large minnows basked in the sun two feet away, undisturbed by the almost pendulum-like activity of the 'wee tim'rous beastie' shooting from the water into its hole in the bank, and then back again into the water so quickly that it was impossible to see what, if anything, it was carrying.

An indefinable air of vague sadness, a solemnity in the tor-capped upland that rises steeply from our garden, explain to some extent the almost unreal radiance of the largest pond which nestles in a sunlit hollow in the hillside, not unlike a beautiful flower in an unexpected niche between two rocks, glowing with a loveliness hitherto unknown. Nor does the garden detract from this effect, for it is indeed little more than a handful of young larch-trees among heather and bracken beside a tumbling moorland stream, which in the summer flashes back the sun's rays from pools and waterfalls, but in a winter spate turns a roaring foaming mass of water into a giant serpent writhing and twisting in headlong flight down the slope amongst the boulders and the trees. Grey wagtails in the spring and summer months flit round this pool from rock to rock like animated flowers, flying over a square yard of gentian blue lithospermum, or perching beside a green cushion of mossy saxifrage as they flash and flaunt their sulphur-yellow underparts, dip and raise long tails of black and white. Rearing each year two broods at the foot of the garden, they are frequent visitors to pond-side, lawn or stream. Then, when the leaves drop and collect in eddies and form dams in miniature where water runs through narrow clefts of rock, the dipper comes. A day or two ago, looking out of a window at the autumn glory of birch and beech and larch, at the pretty dappling of the lawn by leaves as though by sunlight through trees, a movement in the stream caught my eye. A leaf, it seemed, entangled and turning first its dark upper and then its pale lower surface towards me in a rush of water between a willow and a mossy stone, flashed and then disappeared and then flashed again. Just as I was about to look away, being in no doubt as to the nature of this twinkling speck of light, it flashed once more, but doubled in size, miraculously revealing itself at the same moment as the white throat and breast of a dipper curtsying or bobbing in its pleasant way. The leaf effect had been caused by its head and neck appearing and disappearing behind the fall of water which hid the rest of its body. Invisible as these birds often are when water foams white between dark granite boulders, it must be rare indeed to see the dip without

the dipper as I had done, rarer even than to catch the little fellow not doing its utmost to live up to its name. Whenever rain descends in torrents and the stream rises we are almost sure to see the dipper bobbing on the small pond, heedless of drenching rain between its dives into the water after morsels drowned in the flood. In the summer its visits are few and far between, as though our stream is then beneath its notice.

The wagtail is here the bird of flowers and warm weather, the dipper of spates and dark days of mist and rain. Singing in the bleakest months of the year a song which is but an avian version of the sound of water tumbling over rocks, the dipper is as much a part of our garden as is the sound of running water, the croak of a raven in the distance, the sight of buzzards wheeling overhead and the touch of the soft west wind that blows over mile upon mile of open moorland at a thousand feet above the sea. Yet, though the dipper and wagtail are the characteristic birds of our water-garden, it is impossible to think of the latter without also thinking of the occasional visits of a kingfisher, whose dazzling brilliance might, perhaps, seem in keeping in July on the edge of the largest pool, but whose normal appearance in our garden is the avian counterpart of this moorland flower-patch. At least, it is on those days when every flower seems to have exerted itself beyond its wont, when one thinks that never can such a day have been before, and believes that never can everything combine to produce such a day again. Yet, as surely as the kingfisher will return, so surely will another summer bring a day as wonderful. However that may be, I like to think that the spirit of our water-garden at different seasons is made visible in these three birds.

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THE CLIMB.

BY C. GORDON GLOVER.

THEY said that he had sat in the bow-window of the 'Dochter Inn' day in, day out, for fifteen years. He never went out a great deal, just a potter every so often along the gulley which the Dochter Burn carved for itself in its clamorous descent from the mountains some two miles distant. And then he would be back again in his window, leaning comfortably in the leathern deeps of his special chair, his eyes watching the grape-purple spires of the summits which held the sky, sometimes nudging the clear blue arch, at others standing silently between the white scarves of drifting mist or veiled in the low cloud which steamed in on the Atlantic wind. He seldom took his eyes from the mountains. He loved them. He could have sketched them, every gulley, rift, crack, buttress in perfect proportion with his eyes shut. And he knew them. When the thin flag on the flagstaff of the inn fell limp after the north wind, fluttered again, died, and finally blew out with the light bellies of breeze from the south-west, he knew what to look for. The cloud would form just there by the buttress pinnacle, wreath it, vanish, form again and then drift slowly across the main precipice. And if the wind changed to the south he knew that the mists would rise before streaming tatters of light cloud, and the ridge would come and go, come and go behind the weather.

The climbers who came year after year knew him. The new climbers were told about him. He sat in his window, an old man now, and watched them pull on the woollen socks over their stockings, watched them smear the dark dubbin on the great claw-rimmed boots, watched them throwing lunch-filled knapsacks over their jerkins. Watched them as they clumped down the cobbled path of the hotel. Watched them as they streamed, tiny as ants over the green uprising bogs, and watched them still, through a great brass telescope, as they paused at the foot of the mountains, adjusted ropes and started the slow rock-climb to one or other of the summits. Sometimes he would catch his breath, blush with pleasure. His hands would tremble a little as he held the

big telescope. And he would turn round to anyone who might be in the room. 'See those fellers out there. Hey, take a look through this. There, just to the left of the terrace rake. They're tackling my climb. Make a mess of it, too, shouldn't wonder. These young chaps . . .'

And if the other occupant of the room were a mountaineer, even a stranger to the old man in the window, he would understand, give reverence and say, 'No, your climb? Tell me about it.' Then Anderson (for that was the old man in the window) would take him into the hall of the hotel and show him the gigantic photographic enlargement of the mountain face, webbed with white lines denoting this route and that. You may see it to-day, that photograph. And if you look about three inches to the right of the main gully which divides the Black Sgurr from the Red Sgurr you will see a dotted line quivering to the summit. At each end of it there is an 'A,' and under the photograph you will see the note; 'A—A. Anderson's Climb. First climbed by John Anderson and party, June, 1880.'

Anderson would tell anyone about the climb. Any mountaineer, that is. Those who did not love mountains were not loved of Anderson. 'A thick mist, there was,' he would begin, 'but we'd waited a week, and couldn't hang on much longer. Tricky start, got to turn a bad *mauvais pas* on the terrace, and after that the slabs. See 'em from here, there to the right, like the lid of a box to the right of the gully. . . .' There was no question of humouring the old man. Mountaineers love mountaineers. And Anderson had been a great mountaineer in his day. There was his climb to prove it, a stiff bit of work, too. His own climb, bearing his own name. A famous climb now, the rocks along each inch of it scored with the nails of a thousand followers of the pioneer. A—A. Anderson's Climb.

It had been a lot of years since he climbed now. He had developed a heart. Oh, well, men did. Mountaineers did. It was well known. But if he couldn't climb he could live within sight of his hills and within sound of them: hill music of the Dochter Burn trampling down from its source under the high scree.

In the evenings the cragsmen, bone-weary, sweating or rain-soaked, clumped into the inn, threw off their nailed boots and gathered in the little lounge. They talked to Anderson. He loved to hear them talk about their day, though he couldn't join in. But he would growl his scorn of the decadence of modern

climbing. 'All fingers and toes, sticking on in a pretty-pretty way like daddy-long-legs on a wall. We climbed in my day, got plenty of friction points. You don't know the feel of your back wedged in a narrow chimney, I shouldn't wonder. You're all mincing about outside the thing. Pshaw.' The climbers would look at one another, and at Anderson. Good old chap. Decent old chap. 'We're doing your climb to-morrow.' 'You are?' The eyes lit up. 'Then take the second gulley pitch easy if it's wet. Belay through the little window on the right wall. I remember once. . . .'

He knew that he would climb his route again—one day. One day. He didn't know when, but he knew he could not leave the world, leave his hills, without going up again, feeling the inviting presence of a good hold, seeing the mists smoke into the corrie, standing on the Red Sgurr and looking over the western sea to the evening isles. And smelling the wind, rock-chilled and bitter, sighing over the ridge.

Nobody was more surprised than he when he did decide to climb. All morning the sun had blazed through the bow-window. It made him feel hot and dizzy. The ridge was sharp as a scythe against the blue. The inn was deserted at lunchtime, and when he resumed his seat he smelled the warm benison of peat and heather. The moors trembled under the burnished air. He stood up, quite suddenly, and went to his room. He pulled out his boots, running his hands over the rough leather. They were hardened with disuse. For ten minutes he oiled them till the leather was sleek and supple. He changed into his woollen breeches and jersey, drew on the boots and went into the hall. There was a rope hanging there. He took it down, felt its pleasant coils, laughed to himself lightly and threw it over his shoulder.

From the window he took a final look at the peaks. He felt as sprightly as a schoolboy. Yes, he told himself, to-day was the day and no mistake. He would see the evening isles that night. It was hot, breathlessly hot, in the lounge. So hot that for a moment he sank into his chair to get a breather. Out there the hills were sharp with heat. The bloom of sun lay over them like fine dust. But this, he told himself, would not do, lying there while the climb waited. He rose and went to the window, feeling the breath of the moors pouring through. It made him feel good, that. Cooler. The chair had made him feel queer because it was right in the line of the sun through the glass.

He chuckled to himself as he swung down the path to the slope of the moors. Those youngsters would get a shock when they got in that night. 'Just did my climb again.' '*Did your climb?*' 'Yes, why not? We're not all dead yet.'

He had never felt so well. The bogs were dry with weeks of fine weather, and they sprang deliciously to the tread of his booted feet. He stopped after the first mile to rest and sniff. Why, there had never been a day like this, never such a heady fragrance of thyme and bog myrtle and young heather, never such a mumbling of bees as they toppled among the honeyed treasure. The larks hung their streaming banners of song over the moors: the day was sharpened with the music of the larks, numbed again with the honey-heavy pleasure of the bees, made delicious with the myrtle. How the stuff smelled! Anderson thrilled. These western parts, you knew you were in them the moment you smelled the myrtle running in green billows to the mountain's feet. Everywhere, everywhere in the west.

The trudge up the moors was long, necessitating the bent back, the hands on the hips, the trudge, trudge, trudge, up, up, up. The 'bog trot' he had christened it. It was fifteen years since he had done it and he was surprised that it did not seem stiffer. Arrived at the foot of the rocks where the dark precipices rose each side of the gulley he reckoned that he had done the walk in an hour. That was not bad. As a youngster he had taken fifty minutes. He stopped, looking back at the down sweep of the moors to the sea, looking up to the deep menace of the rising rock face. Why, it seemed only yesterday that he had stood there last. A June day it was: just like this one. Lovingly he ran his eyes over the face, picking out the salient points of his climb. The terrace, the bad step, the slabs flat as a sloping billiard-table, and above them his chimney, Anderson's chimney, leading to the narrow gulley with its three steep pitches.

He felt excited and happy, desperately happy. The first touch of the rocks told him that none of his confidence had left him. The easy scramble to the start of the terrace was behind him in a few minutes and his fingers were closing over the old familiar hold by which he had first hauled himself on to the narrow ledge which sloped up the entire rock face before it died out some fifty feet from a distant point of the ridge. It was a tempting ledge to follow for those who did not know it. He had once followed it himself only to find himself eventually clinging, flylike, to vertical

rock with no way forward and the backwards descent a matter of touch and go. He had made it—just. He had never forgotten it. The end of the terrace was a death-trap, and even now as he climbed steadily to the point where the great smooth slabs sloped upwards to the upper gulley he recalled the thrill of that experiment.

His heart beat quickly at the *mauvais pas*. The terrace died away here for some five feet and necessitated a swing over the abyss from a good hand-hold to its resumption beyond. Tentatively he felt along the upper rock, thrilled again as his hand closed on that comfortable knuckle, gripped, held, took weight as his feet kicked towards the comfort of the ledge. He was afire now, keen and full of the old zest. The sun beat hotly off the rock: far overhead the daws wheeled and sailed in the blue. 'Yek' they called to him, 'Yek, yek, yek.' Music, sweet music of the high places. He could hear, too, the chuckling of the *Dochter Burn* down the main gulley.

Now he was on the slabs. He had always liked slabs, though one did feel like a fly on the wall spread against their bare steep. He followed the nail-marks. It had been different that first time. No nail-marks, nothing to guide him but instinct. The slabs took him a quarter of an hour, and when he got to the wide ledge which took the climber into the narrow chimney he sat down to get his breath. Already the air was colder, full of the grave smell of rocks. The sweetest of all smells. Anderson, sitting there, looking over the moorland miles to the rise of distant hills, to the sea with the islands like fallen thunder-claps rising from it, wanted to sing, shout, laugh with happiness. But the chimney was waiting.

Grunting to himself he entered it, glancing scornfully at the new nail-marks which showed how modern climbers minced up as far from the walls as possible. None of that for him. Right into the rock crevice, back to rock, knees to rock, hands to rock, straining, pushing, pulling, worming. Plenty of friction points. Anderson's chimney. His chimney. His very own chimney. Good, sweet thought! He had fancied from below that he would find the chimney stiff work, but his own suppleness surprised him. Why, he was up the thing and in the gulley before he could say Jack Robinson. That was what came of knowing a climb like he knew this one. No waste of time feeling, poking, testing, nibbling at each step.

The gulley in wet weather streamed water. But to-day it was dry as a bone, and the gigantic boulders which filled it steeply were warm with sunshine. The twenty-foot pitch worried him a little. The almost vertical face seemed endless, and he almost wished that he had a leader up there, rope in hand, calling, 'Right, Anderson, all set here. Come up, will you.' But he was alone, his face pressed to the rough rock, hands and feet working in true climber's rhythm, unhurried, unflustered. That was it. The final hold, up, leg over, there! Then the gulley again, sixty feet of it, and the second pitch, a thirty-foot vertical rock. He untied his rope and for ten minutes worked for the belay through the little window on the right. At last it was through, secured, and he was climbing again, desperately, seriously, alone on the mountain face. The daws called wildly. 'Yek, yek,' and again, 'Yek' they called, music of the climb, wild high music, sweet as a cloud-high wind.

As he sat, triumphant, happy, he heard the voices coming up to him, talking, laughing up on the breeze. Leaning over the edge his eyes ran along the precipice below. He could see nothing. On the terrace below the slabs, maybe. They'd get a shock to see him up there, thinking him in his window! Then his heart turned over sharply. Away to the right, eight hundred feet below him, the climbers moved upwards along the terrace rake. But they were beyond the slabs, moving foot by foot to that place where all holds ended on smooth rock. But now they were safe. He thanked God for that. Cupping his hands he shouted down. 'Hey, hey!' And again, as they did not turn, 'Hey, you below there.' Faces, tiny as threepenny-pieces, swung up towards him. He waved, pointing backwards. 'Go back now. You can't get to the ridge that way—it's death to try it.' He heard the echoes of his warning go pealing down the shattered rock. They called back, 'Thanks—who's that?' He chuckled to himself. 'It's me—Anderson.' Standing, he waved to them, watched them stare in astonishment, yell another 'Thanks,' and he turned to the final pitch.

It must, he thought, as he set his toes into these last crevices, have been Providence that sent him up the mountain that day. Why, those youngsters would have . . . Oh, well, no use worrying himself over what might have been. They were all right now. That was what mattered.

He stood alone on the Red Sgurr. Below him the broken route of his climb fell sharply away. On all sides the ridge ran

along, sharp as a knife, broken, shattered, storm-carved. And he was on top of it. A wild intoxication gave way to peace, calm. He was alive again after those years. Alive and on his ridge, looking down upon it, along it. He sat and turned his face to the sea and the western isles.

The wind blew up, keen and fresh, a wind of sea-mountains. He breathed it deeply, scenting it, feeling it play through his hair. His hands touched the cairn, rough and sweetly significant. This was happiness, this was triumph, conquering, living. Out to sea the isles rose, purple storms of stone on the evening sea. The daws wheeled, the ravens croaked. The wind was in Anderson's ears. For a long, long time he sat looking towards his evening isles, beyond which, and in the path of the setting sun, lies, say the Gaels, the blessed island of Tir-nan-Og, Valhalla of brave men and their patient womenfolk.

Later that evening two young men clumped cheerfully into the lounge of the 'Dochter Inn.' 'Narrow squeak,' they said, and then stopped, noticing the strange look of other faces. 'Well?' said someone dully. 'Up on the terrace,' said one of the young men. 'We were trying to make the ridge by following the rake when who should we see but old Anderson, shouting from the gully. Warned us not to carry on.'

Somebody said quietly, 'You must be mistaken. Old Anderson's dead. They found him in his chair by the window just after lunch. Heart failure. Must have been the heat. Poor old chap, in his climbing things, too.'

ORDERED HOME.

I ONLY know the lonely places,
The green jungles, and the open spaces
Where the wind and moon are my friends.

I love the bamboo-shadowed ways
Where the sun-warped bullock-ghari sways
In the foot-deep ruts and the dust.

Mine the camp in the forest glade,
The rest at noon in the banyan's shade
With the langurs jabbering near,

Wood-smoke scenting the short twilight
As swiftly the clear-lit Eastern night
Creeps down on the evening breeze.

Mine the smell of the mohwa flowers
The sloth-bear seeks in the mid-night hours,
Lurching out from his rock-strewn hill.

I tramp nullahs the pea-fowl love,
The thickets deep where the sambhur rove,
And the haunts of the bara-singh.

I love to hear the parrots scream,
To watch, by some mugger-haunted stream,
The cheetah edge down to the pool,

To see, at dawn, the camp fire dim
As the mists lift from the jheels, and slim
Tall toddy-palms bow to the sun. . . .

These are the smells and sounds I've known ;
To me the sun and moon have shown
Ways that I called my own, my own, . . .
So what shall I do in London Town,
Smoke-grimed, noisy old London Town ?

A. R. UBSDELL.

Kidderpore, Calcutta.

THE NEW YEAR OF GOD.

BY M. A. MURRAY.

THREE o'clock and a still starlight night in mid-September in Upper Egypt. At this hour the village is usually asleep, but to-night it is astir, for this is Nauruz Allah, the New Year of God, and the narrow brown streets are full of the soft sound of bare feet moving towards the Nile. The village lies on a strip of ground ; on one side is the river, now swollen to its height, on the other are the floods of the inundation spread in a vast sheet of water to the edge of the desert. On a windy night the lapping of wave-lets is audible on every hand ; but to-night the air is calm and still, there is no sound but the muffled tread of unshod feet in the dust and the murmur of voices subdued in the silence of the night.

In ancient times throughout the whole of Egypt the night of High Nile was a night of prayer and thanksgiving to the great god, the Ruler of the river, Osiris himself. Now it is only in this Coptic village that the ancient rite is preserved, and here the festival is still one of prayer and thanksgiving. In the great cities the New Year is a time of feasting and processions, as blatant and uninteresting as a Lord Mayor's Show, with that additional note of piercing vulgarity peculiar to the East. In this village, far from all great cities and—as a Coptic community—isolated from and therefore uninfluenced either by its Moslem neighbours or by foreigners, the festival is one of simplicity and piety. The people pray as of old to the Ruler of the river, no longer Osiris, but Christ ; and as of old they pray for a blessing upon their children and their homes.

There are four appointed places on the river bank to which the village women go daily to fill their water jars and to water their animals. To these four places the villagers are now making their way, there to keep the New Year of God.

The river gleams coldly pale and grey ; Sirius blazing in the eastern sky casts a narrow path of light across the mile-wide waters. A faint glow low on the horizon shows where the moon will rise, a dying moon on the last day of the last quarter. The glow gradually spreads and brightens till the thin crescent, like a fine

silver wire, rises above the distant palms. Even in that attenuated form the moonlight eclipses the stars and the glory of Sirius is dimmed. The water turns to the colour of tarnished silver, smooth and glassy; the palm-trees close at hand stand black against the sky, and the distant shore is faintly visible. The river runs silently and without a ripple in the windless calm; the palm-fronds, so sensitive to the least movement of the air, hang motionless and still; all Nature seems to rest upon this holy night.

The women enter the river and stand knee-deep in the running stream praying; they drink nine times, wash the face and hands, and dip themselves in the water. Here is a mother carrying a tiny wailing baby; she enters the river and gently pours the water nine times over the little head. The wailing ceases as the water cools the little hot face. Two anxious women hasten down the steep bank, a young boy between them; they hurriedly enter the water and the boy squats down in the river up to his neck, while the mother pours the water nine times with her hands over his face and shaven head. There is the sound of a little gasp at the first shock of coolness, and the mother laughs, a little tender laugh, and the grandmother says something under her breath at which they all laugh softly together. After the ninth washing the boy stands up, then squats down again and is again washed nine times, and yet a third nine times; then the grandmother takes her turn, and she also washes him nine times. Evidently he is very precious to the hearts of those two women, perhaps the mother's last surviving child. Another sturdy urchin refuses to sit down in the water, frightened perhaps, for a woman's voice speaks encouragingly, and presently a faint splashing and a little gurgle of childish laughter show that he too is receiving the blessing of the Nauruz of God.

A woman stands alone, her slim young figure in its wet clinging garments silhouetted against the steel-grey water. Solitary she stands, apart from the happy groups of parents and children, then, stooping, she drinks from her hand once, pauses and drinks again; and so drinks nine times with a short pause between every drink and a longer pause between every three. Except for the movement of her hand as she lifts the water to her lips, she stands absolutely still, her body tense with the earnestness of her prayer, the very atmosphere round her charged with the agony of her supplication. Throughout the whole world there is only one thing which causes a woman to pray with such intensity, and that one thing

is children. This may be a childless woman praying for a child ; or it may be that, in this land where Nature is as careless and wasteful of infant life as of all else, this is a mother praying to the God of life to grant health to the last of her little brood, feeling assured that on this festival of mothers and children her prayers must perforce be heard. At last she straightens herself, beats the water nine times with the corner of her garment, goes softly up the bank, and disappears in the darkness.

Little family parties come down to the river, a small child usually riding proudly on her father's shoulder. The men often affect to despise the festival as a women's affair, but with memories in their hearts of their own mothers and their own childhood they sit quietly by the side of the river and drink nine times. A few of the rougher young men fling themselves into the water and swim boisterously past, but public feeling is against them, for the atmosphere is one of peace and prayer enhanced by the calm and silence of the night.

For thousands of years on the night of High Nile the mothers of Egypt have stood in the great river to implore from the God of the Nile a blessing upon their children ; formerly from a god who demanded a human life as his price, now from a God who Himself has memories of childhood and a Mother. Now, as then, the stream bears on its broad surface the echo of countless prayers, the hopes and fears of human hearts ; and in my memory remains a vision of the darkly flowing river, the soft murmur of prayer, the peace and calm of the New Year of God. *Abu Nauruz hallal.*

THE INGENIOUS MR. JEMMIT.

BY MAJOR J. H. HILLS, M.P.

It was in one of the many bad books on fishing, *The Gentleman Angler*, 1726, that I first met Mr. Jemmit. I was looking through that worthless concoction of piracies and plagiarisms, enjoying the beauty of its type, but otherwise profoundly uninterested, when I was suddenly brought up short by these words: 'the best sort of *Artificial Flies* are made by the ingenious Mr. *Jemmit*, and therefore called *Jemmit's Flies*. That Gentleman is a *Nice* and *Complete Artist*, and an *accomplished Angler*.' In the margin was a neat little hand drawn in ink, the finger pointing to Mr. Jemmit's name, and at the bottom of the page was the following note, in handwriting which quite obviously belonged to the first half of the eighteenth century: 'A list of this Gent flys are handed about in Manuscript.'

On reading that ungrammatical sentence I laid the book down, and mused. Who was Mr. Jemmit, that nice and complete artist, he of the delightful name, smacking somehow of Charles Dickens? The best anglers do not write books; they die and their knowledge dies with them. Was Mr. Jemmit one of these? Had not, even in my lifetime, the great Dickie Routledge of Carlisle died, and his secrets perished? Did he not invent a fly whereby he could catch herling, fish after fish, on autumn nights, so cold that you lost fish through your net freezing stiff, when no other fly known to man would catch a single one? Where is that fly now? Where are the flies of yester-year?

Then I wondered if I should ever see that list. I would give a good deal for it, I thought. And, after all, it was possible I might come across it. 'What song the Syrens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, although puzzling questions, are not beyond *all* conjecture,' said Sir Thomas Browne: and the survival of Mr. Jemmit's list seemed less fantastic than the rediscovery of the siren's notes: though, by the way, if the latest claims for ethereal waves be true even that dangerous music may still be floating between the spheres. But I said, no: it may be possible, but it is not likely: and I dismissed the ingenious Mr. Jemmit from my mind.

But it happened. Years later, looking over a sale catalogue

in an auction room, I read the name, and my heart stopped. I got hold of the book, opened it with simulated indifference, and there, bound up with other works, was a manuscript list, *Mr. Jemmit's Book of Flies*. I need not say that I bid for that book, it was knocked down to me, and I put it in my pocket.

When I read it, I was puzzled. It was a good list. The dressings were excellent, some entirely original, some partly borrowed, but all, whether original or borrowed, having the stamp of a master hand. But it was not that which puzzled me. It was that some of the materials given for the manufacture of trout flies were new to me. There was camelion. There was sleeze silk. But above all there were two substances of an even deeper mystery, sail and barge. So I set to work to discover what they were.

Sleeze silk is unravelled silk. Sleazy is thin, or flimsy, or of little substance, according to the *New English Dictionary*. It is not a very common word, but it has survived until to-day. A lady of my acquaintance told me that her mother would say to her as she sat sewing by her side as a little girl—Break off that bit, it's sleazy—when the sewing silk unravelled so much as to make it difficult to thread. Moreover, Emerson uses the adjective, and I came across it the other day in Mr. Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. Very possibly it is one of the many old words which have survived later in the United States than here, and it seems to be commoner in American literature than in ours. But it is found here. It is used in Miss Frances Hart's excellent murder story, *The Bellamy Trial*, Andrew Lang used the substantive sleaziness, and, anyhow, it is a word presenting no difficulty. But the interesting thing is that it is, according to Doctor Johnson, the same word as sleeve. I doubt whether modern philologists accept this: but my awe for the great man is so profound that I should never dare to differ from him. If he says that sleazy is the same word as sleeve, it must be so. And about sleeve there is more to be written.

Sleeve silk, according to the *New English Dictionary*, is silk thread capable of being separated into smaller filaments. This is exactly the sense in which it is used by Donne in a well-known passage in which he tells how

‘Curious traitors, sleeve silk flies
Bewitch poor fishes wandring eyes.’

Thus, be it noted, does sleeve lead us back to flyfishing. Sleeve

silk flies are flies whose bodies are made of untwisted silk, of what fishermen call floss silk. But since it means silk that can be untwisted, it is also used for silk not yet untwisted, or silk tangled or in the skein; as in Drayton's *Quest of Cynthia*:

‘A fountain light,
Whose brim with pinks was plaited;
The banks with daffodillies dight
With grass like sleeve was matted.’

That is to say, grass tangled or matted like a skein of silk. Sleeve also has the same meaning in Lady Macbeth's magnificent line,

‘Sleep, that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care.’

To knit up the sleeve of a coat or dress has no particular symbolism. But to knit up a ravelled skein of silk, to disentangle it, to smooth it out, and to plait it up as it ought to be plaited, that is a gorgeous simile. (We all know how the mere presence of some people has the effect of smoothing and taking the tangles out of our disordered nerves, just as a skilful hand smooths and disentangles a skein of silk.)

So much for sleeze silk. Mr. Jemmit, you will observe, has already led us into pleasant places. Camelon causes little difficulty. It must be cameline, and cameline is camlet, a cloth which may have been made originally from camel's hair and silk, but more commonly of wool and silk, a beautiful and well-known fabric. Camlet is so frequently mentioned as a fly-making material that hardly a list in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries fails to contain it.

But now we come to the real difficulties. What does sail mean, or barge? I never heard the words before as fly-making fabrics. First of all, let us look at the internal evidence afforded by Mr. Jemmit's list. They both are material for bodies of trout flies. Now bodies at that time were made of the wool, hair or fur of various animals; down of birds, worsted, camlet, mohair, crewel or other woollen substances; silk, straw, gold twist; and the herls of feathers, such as ostrich, peacock and pheasant; more rarely of whole feathers, such as a plover's top or bittern's plume. These are the materials given in Bowlker's *Angling*, the standard work of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and in this class barge and sail must come.

This being so, it is obvious that barge and sail may be read together in their ordinary meanings, and that Mr. Jemmit's flies

had bodies made of the unravelled thread of sailcloth. Sails of barges are usually red or brown, excellent hues for the deceiving of trout. His list supports this, for his brown fly has a body partly composed of 'middle barge-sail' and a fly actually called the light barge fly is compacted of 'light barge mixed with light barge-sail.' So there, I thought, is the solution of barge. But then I was brought up with a jerk. Please read the quotation again: barge is a different substance from barge-sail. It must be so, or why mention them separately? Therefore barge does not always mean sailcloth. It means also a separate article. I turned again to Mr. Jemmit's list, and this obviously is the case: for instance, his olive fly has a body of 'light camel's wool, yellow sail, green worsted or green sail, light barge, fox-cub down of an ash colour.' So I came to the certain though fantastic conclusion that barge has two meanings; it is either an attribute of sail or it is a separate entity. But what is it? It cannot have the ordinary meaning of boat, for though you can make flies out of sailcloth, neither man nor angel can make them out of boats.

Is there in English a word barge or like it, denoting a substance which can be used to make trout flies? This substance is not sailcloth, but is almost certainly a thread, wool or the like. So I started on my hunt again, returning first to internal evidence. Barge, as the text showed, could be of different colours. It could be light, middle, or dark, or it could be copper-coloured. Moreover, barge is used not only as a substantive, but also as an attribute denoting colour. For instance, one fly has a body of 'barge-colour sail.' Therefore we reach this point: barge is a substance, not a sailcloth, which can be of more tints than one, and yet it can be used to signify a particular tint. So, for example, can rose. Rose used as a colour means pink: yet roses can be crimson, pink, orange, yellow, or white. Barge, therefore, while it can be of different hues, possesses its own intrinsic hue: and this, be it noted, is one that can readily be recognised, for the reader of the list is assumed to know what barge-colour means. And also, it may be added, what barge itself means.

That is the internal evidence, now for external. I am fairly well acquainted with fishing literature, and I could find no other mention of barge. Therein I was ignorant, as will appear. So I had to go further afield. I consulted both fishermen and philologists, many and learned, but none could help. An enquiry in *Notes and Queries* produced not one single answer. Nor did dictionaries assist.

I looked at several, new and old, dialect ones too, without avail. So, for the time, I was beaten.

Then I had another piece of luck. A friend, addicted to light reading, chanced to be looking through James V's household accounts, printed in R. Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials in Scotland*, Vol. I. In those accounts are some interesting entries. For instance, on 15 January, 1517, 'at the Quenis cumin to Edinburgh' there were granted to 'Colene Campbell, the Kinge's servitour' six ells of 'grene Birgen settene, price of ye elne xij s.'

Could barge be the same fabric as birge satin or sateen? It was possible. I will discuss that in a moment. But first a word about that entry. The Queen in question was Margaret Tudor, widow of James IV, that king of Scotland who was killed at Flodden. Their son, who had succeeded at the age of seventeen months, was James V. Queen Margaret's return to Edinburgh in 1517 was an event of some significance. Daughter of Henry VII, and sister of Henry VIII, she was a regular Tudor, headstrong, unscrupulous and amorous. The shattering defeat of Flodden, a baby king, an English Queen and she a Tudor, the murderous quarrels of Scotch nobles and bishops, the loss of the auld alliance with France, and the intrigues of Henry VIII had by 1517 reduced Scotland to a state of impotence and distraction from which she never recovered so long as she was a separate kingdom. Margaret, less than a year after Flodden, had married, and soon detested, Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus, a marriage heavy with fate. In the next year she fled to England, and there gave birth to a daughter Margaret, afterwards Countess of Lennox, mother of Darnley, and so grandmother of James VI and I and ancestress of the Stuart kings. And the very extract that I have quoted is of the preparations made for the return of her turbulent personality to Edinburgh, where her intrigues, her love affairs and her violent and volatile temperament intensified, if it were possible, that welter of feuds and factions of which the history of the following years is made up.

So the ingenious Mr. Jemmit led me into a stormy sea of history. But there was still more: for in a further extract from James V's household accounts we find that in August, 1538, there were bought six and a half ells of 'grene Birge Satyne, to be the Quenis Fule ane Gowne,' and also five and a half ells of 'zallow birge Satyne, to be her ane Kirtill, price of ye elne x s, *summa* lv s.' By 1538 James V had grown up and married: and apparently his queen

had a female fool at her court, as kings had male ones. The queen was 'her present Grace,' that is, James V's second wife. He had first married Madeleine, the lovely but luckless daughter of Francis I, who died just six months later. In 1538 he wedded the widowed Madame de Longueville, Mary of Guise. Henry VIII had also wanted to add this large and comely lady to his collection of wives: 'he said that he was big in person and needed a big wife': but she not unnaturally preferred even a turbulent Edinburgh to the probability of Tower Hill. Accordingly she married James, and their daughter was Mary Queen of Scots; so fate hung heavy over this marriage also.

Lastly, one more amusing entry. 2nd April, 1541: '*Item deliverit to Johnne Bertane, to be ane Coit, hois, and brekis, to the Littill Twrk, two elnis of raid and vj quarteris of zallow iij li xvij s. Item, to be him ane Dowblatt, x quarteris raid and zallow Birge Sating xxxv s.*' The Queen's Turkish page must have looked gorgeous. Cannot you see him in coat, hose and breeks, with his black skin—he was probably a negro—shown off by his brilliant doublet, half red, and half yellow?

But it is time to go back to barge and its meaning. Could it be the same as the birge satin in which both Mary of Guise's fool and her 'Littill Twrk' were dressed? I had already, when chasing barge through dictionary after dictionary, come across birge. This was an obsolete form of the name of a fabric called Bruges, after the town whence it came. It was a woven satin, not uncommon in Scotland, and known in England too. I had read the reference to it hastily, and rejected it, because it was a woven material, not a thread. And, after reflection, I rejected it again.

But then the same friend came to my help once more. Birge was a thread as well as a woven fabric. In the *Scottish Treasurer's Accounts* for 1473 there is, for expenses of the Royal Chapel, '*Item, for j li. of Birges threde to mend the vestamentis ij s. vj d.*' And again in 1501, '*Item, the xvi of March delivered to the browdstair (i.e. embroiderer) j pund of Birge threid iij s.*' Further hunting discovered birget thread, or birges thread, in John Jamieson's *Supplement to Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, Vol. I, 1825. And then I found, what I ought to have noticed before, that it is also given in the *New English Dictionary*.

So barge may be birge thread. It may be. I do not say it is. But that is as far as I can get at present. Perhaps some reader can carry the trail further.

So much for barge. Sail still puzzled me. Of course, if you take it always to denote threads of the sailcloth used on barges all is easy. But I was, to tell the truth, not quite happy. The threads of dark red sailcloth when unravelled would make excellent body for several flies: but I confess I should have liked confirmation. I searched but found none. I thought there was none and put the matter aside. But then I had another piece of luck. A correspondent told me (what I ought to have known) that Sir John Hawkins, in a note to his 1760 edition of Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*, gives a circumstantial account of the use of barge-sail for fly-making, 'concerning which,' he says, 'the reader is to know, that the sails of West country and other barges, when old, are usually converted into tilts,—under which there is almost a continual smoak arising from the fire and the steam of the beef-kettle which all such barges carry,—and which in time dyes the tilt of a fine brown: this would be excellent dubbing, but that the material of these sails is sheep's wool, which soaks in the water and soon becomes very heavy; however, get of this as many shades as you can.'

So there is sail interpreted, and barge-sail, too. Sail can either be barge-coloured (barge-sail, probably red or brown) or it can, Mr. Jemmit shows, be other colours, such as green or yellow. Anyhow, sail is solved, if barge is not.

I must say good-bye to Mr. Jemmit; good-bye for the present, I hope not permanently. I feel a deep gratitude towards him. He is an admirable travelling companion, for he has that great virtue of a travelling companion in that he is constantly revealing unknown qualities. Look what a surprising journey he has led me. Starting with trout flies, a technical matter interesting to a few, but dull beyond words to most, he takes me first into the company of great poets who are dead, and then among persons who have played a mighty part in the history of their day. It is as though one, purporting to conduct you to Paisley or to Pittsburg, suddenly bade you look up and see Petra or Palmyra or Ang-kor. And all this he has done so easily and pleasantly, one incident leading naturally to another, that I have felt no sense of fatigue. Moreover, I do not think that he has finished with me yet. I have the feeling that he has more to show me, and that one day, soon or late, he will take me by the hand once again, and conduct me on some unexpected and delectable travels. I am well content that it should be so: I await his call, and will follow wherever he may lead.

A HAND TO EACH.

BY W. H. D. ROUSE.

OUT of all the set luncheons and dinners which I have attended in my life, and from all those who have sat by me on one side or the other, two persons remain in my memory, and will always remain, one a man, and one a woman. Neither of them knew me from Adam when we sat down; we introduced ourselves, and spent pleasant time in conversation, and separated for ever. I do not suppose either of them remembers me, for they have no such cause of remembrance as I have; but I shall never forget them, however long I may live. They passed me their oysters.

It was the lady who came first, and by her gracious act taught me a useful point of manners. 'Let me pass you my oysters,' she said gently, and passed them. 'That is the only thing we may pass on like that, you know, with good manners.' I did not know before, but how glad I was to learn it! With almost incredulous joy I saw four new oysters descend upon my plate, a gift of the gods. 'Don't you want them, really?' I asked. Of course I knew that women do not like oysters, but they do not really like smoking, and see how they smoke! 'No,' she said, 'I don't like them, but I am glad you do.' As for the rest of that luncheon, a hand's-breadth of it shines alone mid the blank miles round about.

My other never-to-be-forgotten friend did not know that point of good manners, until I told him; for I saw his jellies lying neglected before him, and, greatly daring, I asked him if he knew? He did not, but he was quick to learn; he also passed his oysters to me, and made me his friend for ever. After that, I have always watched, and sometimes, but rarely, seen, but never in time; I never had any luck again. The waiter was waved off, and his eye could not be caught; or horror! someone else bagged them first.

And yet there is no man living who could enjoy an oyster as I can. Pepys might have run me hard; I should certainly have run him hard, if I had seen him hurrying off with his barrel to the 'Sun' in Fish Street. To think that oysters were once the poor man's ordinary! I can remember them at sixpence a score, but at that time I had no sixpence; now they are sixpence apiece, and

I shudder to think what a barrel would cost. Once indeed I was happy ; for it was my duty to entertain an old friend, who could take only the lightest food, such as fish, and it was my duty therefore to supply him with oysters. Of course I had to eat some too, or it would have been inhospitable ; and what joy it is to find duty and pleasure at one ! Sam Weller must have lived in the happy days when oysters were sixpence a hundred. He certainly had not many sixpences, but he was always ready to stand oysters to his friends ; and what a fine show they make in the dish, as we see them in the old engravings of the *Pickwick Papers*.

Once indeed I tasted a delicacy which might face the oyster without a blush. I was walking on the sands of Calymnos Island, in the warm summer, with a Greek friend, and thinking of a swim, when I caught sight of a man in the sea, who was behaving in an odd sort of way. He stood shoulder-deep ; he kept moving his head about, and every now and then he would dive down under the water, and after a minute reappear with his hands full of something, which he then threw out upon the sand. They looked like round black stones. I asked my friend what they were, and what the man was doing. He said, 'Diving for sea-urchins ; shall we have some ?'

We strolled up to the place, and saw the sand littered with round shells about the size of a tennis-ball, and covered with prickles. By and by the man came out, and greeted us kindly : 'Have some sea-urchins ?' So we all sat down on the sand, and began to crack them. When the hollow dome came off, there was a little pink pat, the size of your thumbnail, flat on the bottom. I put one on my tongue : what a divine flavour ! like nothing else in the world—delicate, indescribable in human words ! We had more. The diver did the honours, and he, as was proper, ate more than both of us together. After he had taken his fill, he sighed deeply, and picked up one twice the size of the rest, which he had kept by his side ready all this time. I said quietly to my friend, 'What's that, can you tell me ?' But the diver heard me, and said with a laugh, 'Aha ! this is what the Lord provides ! In every urchin-bed there's a big one, we call it the Mammy, a certain cure for any unpleasantness in case you have eaten too many of the others !'

A scene such as this, no doubt, was what Patroclus had in mind, when he ran his lance through Hector's charioteer, and sent him tumbling out of the chariot. 'Look there !' he said, 'a light-heeled fellow, upon my word ! What a neat header that was !

If he were in a boat instead of a chariot, he might get up sea-urchins enough for the whole crew !'

There is one drawback to the paradise we are bidden to hope for. There will be no more sea ; and no sea, no oyster. Now also even the earthly supply is cut off, at least for John Doe and Richard Roe. I have never in all my life had enough oysters. The four (three since last year) which you get at a feast, serve only to make you want more ; so I hope against hope that I may meet my two friends again. If they would only come both together !

LOVE LANE.

Down the sad way, by the waters of the Sel,

Down sad Love Lane, as the people call it,

That's the twisty alley down to heaven, or to hell,

Which the soul must walk, and take what may befall it.

Love Lane is an old lane,

A cobbled and ill-lighted ;

The folk who live in Love Lane

Are quiet and far-sighted ;

The folk who enter Love Lane

Dare everything ; and never

Pass out again from Love Lane

Except they pass forever.

Go down the sad way, by the waters of the Sel ;

Go down Love Lane and try your mettle there ;

For Love Lane is an old lane, and, fare you ill or well,

There's always death in Love Lane ; and life for those who dare.

G. LAPAGE.

BONNY MARY.

BY E. V. COOPER.

'NURSIE, please tell me the story of Queen Mary and the wee bairn, and give me the silver ball to hold—and I'd like a few chough-Jeans too—I'm afraid of the storm,' said little Ishbel Mackie to her old nurse Elspeth, one wild evening in March. The wind from the North Sea shrieked down the big chimney, and buffeted the walls of the old house, while the waves, driven by a fierce northeaster, dashed against the rocks beneath, sending spray and even small pebbles against the old mullioned windows. 'Come, my bairn, and sit ye doon on your creepie stool here in the chimney-lug beside me at the fire, and don't ye be feart by the wind an' waves—here's a two-three sweeties—and A'll tell ye the tale.' Elspeth sat down in her armchair beside the fire of driftwood, which lighted up the old room with odd blue and green flames. Giving her little charge a few 'chough-Jeans' (home-made caramels, so called because of their tough elasticity and the maker's name) and a small pierced silver ball, which she took from a locked drawer, and taking up her knitting, she began the story of Auld Lang Syne.

'Twas in the year 1565, and Queen Mary had been in Scotland a matter of four years. One fine day she said to her ladies—the four Maries, ye ken—"We will ride to-day to see how the French people are, and how they are doing with the straw-plaiting."

('Ye ken, Miss Ishbel, that Queen Mary brought a wheen folks fra France, to teach the Scots women straw-plaiting for hats; for though she was but a lassie hersel' when she saw them—in Lorraine a'jalouse it was—she was aye thinking of what wad be guid for her puir people in Scotland, and she saw that where the women were doing straw-plaiting for hats, their cottages were comfortable and the weans weel fed and cared.) 'Twas a grand sight to see them all setting oot for their ride that braw morn; their horses prancing, the bridles all hung wi' tassels, an' the leddies all dressed up in silks and velvets, the Queen all in black velvet, wi' a point lace collar that framit her pretty face like a moss-rose. There were a wheen gay lords among them too and the brawest o' them a' rode beside the Queen—an' she was naething loth to hae him

there. His doublet was of grey velvet all slashed wi' pink, and a cloak to match hung round his neck wi' a gowd chain. When they came to the place where the Frenchies were living, they all ran oot to see the Queen an' her leddies; and she kindly speired how they were, an' if a' was weel wi' them an' their plaiting? an' they said they were no' that ill, an' hoped to do better in time to come. Then all the gentles turned to go away, when a wee bairnie from the clachan ran oot into the road, wi' a bit o' pink stuff in her hand, an' she was crying oot, "A hae a giftie for Bonny Mary, an' A must gie it to her!" All the gentles reined up their horses, wondering and laughing; an' the wee lassie's mither ran oot, an' picked her up, an' cried, "Fie for shame, ye wee hizzie, haud yer tongue—A'm fair ashamed o' ye," but the wean only skirled the louder, "Bonny Mary, Bonny Mary, A hae a giftie for ye." Queen Mary was always fond o' weans, an' she beckoned to the guid wife to bring the lassie to her, an' wi' her eyes all shining an' laughing she said, "Now tell me, *chérie*, what is the present you have for me?" "'Tis a kerchief A hae for ye, 'tis ma best kerchief; ma Mither says 'tis too guid to use, but it's na too guid for ye," answered the lassie, looking into the Queen's face quite earnest, an' she gave her the bit o' pink stuff wi' a sprig o' rosemary folded up in it. "'Tis a bonny kerchief," said the Queen, "an' smells very sweetly, but what was't ye called me, Mignonne?" "A called ye Bonny Mary, 'tis what they all call ye—an' bonny ye are—as bonny as an angel," said the bairn, "an' here's a giftie for ye," she said to Lord Darnley, for it was he that rode beside the Queen; an' the lassie gave him a little bunch o' thae harebells—the blue bells o' Scotland, Missie, all trembling on their wee stalks, an' fu' o' the morning dew. The Queen laughed; but she was pleased all the same, an' the folks near by saw her gie a look at the handsome lang leggit laddie beside her. "Methinks 'tis a loyal wee subject we hae here," she said, smiling, "an' 'tis but fair that she should hae a 'giftie,' was't ye called it?—in her turn," an' stooping fra her saddle to where the guid wife held the bairnie in her airms, she gave her a wee ba' o' pierced silver, wi' a smell oot o' it like a summer's day i' an apple orchard. "Keep that in remembrance of Bonny Mary," she said; an' they a' went jingling awa' up the brae. The guid wives a' gathered roond to examine the wee ba' an' to wonder what it was for; but they could make naething o' it, till they bethought them to speir at some o' the Frenchies; an' they telt them that 'twas called a pomander;

a ba' o' pierced gowd or silver, filled wi' sweet spices, an' hung frae a leddie's girdle, for her to smell at. Just then a door opened behind them an' a tall, dark woman stood on the threshold, looking aboot her silently. "'Tis the highland spae wife," the guid wives said to each other, "an' by her looks she has the second sight"—"Did ye see oor bonny Queen, Morag? an' all the gentles, an' the gay callant riding beside her, and looking sae lover-like? an' she like a rose in June?" "Aye did I," answered Morag, "an', cummers, it fair broke my heart to see the wae that's coming sae close to the bonny leddie." "Wae?" cried all the women—"wae to the Queen an' her lover? God forbid!—but what did ye see, woman?" "A canna tell ye what A saw," answered Morag solemnly; "but, a short hour ago, the sun was shining in the deep blue, the sea was quiet; the doos preened their feathers on yon sunny roof—an' look! what see ye the noo?" A great and sudden change had come over the fair scene; dark, ominous clouds blotted out the sun, the wind rose in angry shrieks; a sudden squall, rushing over the sea churned the waves into yeast, lashed by beating hail; the leaden sky overhead was rent by a vivid flash of fire, and thunder crashed. "Look, look," cried Morag to the frightened women, "the kite an' the doo! alack, alack, that A should see it!" As she spoke a kite swooping swiftly from the lowering clouds, seized one of the doves in such a way that the severed head and body fell at their feet, spattering the stones with blood. "Ah, wae is me, wae is me," moaned Morag, "'tis an evil omen; so 'twill be wi' the bonny Queen; 'tis fair weather wi' her the noo—but the storm is coming—the lightning an' the thunner an' the wild waves—she'll know not where to seek for shelter—an' the end, be it sune or be it late, 'twill be the kite an' the doo, an' her fair heid will fa' in the dust." "But, Morag," said one of the women—all frightened now, and many weeping—"the handsome laddie beside her, wull he no' help her? 'Tis a weel faured braw callant." "Him help her?" said Morag, with deep contempt, "he's nought but a figure-head, there's naething in him but what's put in wi' the spune! An' the winding sheet's fair to his breist the noo—but what's come tae the wee lassie?" for the puir wean clasping the silver ba' to her wee heart was skirling fit to waken the deid; "Oh Bonny Mary, Bonny Mary, is a' that coming tae ye? an' A canna help ye—an' he threw awa' the bonny blue bells, an' they've a' trampit i' the glaur!" "Come, ma lassie, come your ways ben," said the guid wife, "an' when neist Father Ambrose

comes, we'll gie him the bonny silver ba' to put on the altar at Kennaquhair, an' he'll pray to Our Lady of Sorrows to keep an' guard our Queen—come what may." And the next time the guid priest came, they gave him the wee ba' and telt him a' about it, but he wad na tak' it; he said that the Queen gave it to the wean and telt her to keep it, and that 'twas an unco great treasure; and the bairnie kept it till she was on her dying bed, and then she gave it to her daughter, and so on till ma Mither gave it to me, an' here 'tis now in an auld hoose i' Fife nae sae far frae where it a' happened sae lang ago.'

'And, Nursie, is it true about the hats?' asked little Ishbel, turning the pomander round and round in her dimpled hands to catch the firelight.

'Tis indeed, Missie; Queen Mary brought the straw plaiters to Scotland, all just as A telt ye, and long years after her deith, puir leddy, her son, King Jamie, brought them a' to England wi' him, an' settled them in Luton, in Bedfordshire; and the hat-making is there to this day—but A ask ye—Wha gies the credit o' it to oor Bonny Mary?'

LOVE IN A COUNTING HOUSE.

(To Margaret, but she would not have it.)

If I could cast the sum of all Love's wealth,
And keep the quaint accounts in his own book,
Like a bad clerk I'd learn to overlook
Thy debts, sweet one, to cancel them by stealth.
And into his sad treasury of sighs,
Where he keeps hoard of vow and prayer and curse,
I would admit no forfeit from thy purse,
Lest paying bring dark gloom on those dear eyes.
Thus would I cheat my master yet be true;
Thus would I pay thy debts from his own store
And robbing him increase his greater gain;
For when I take from him to give to you
Thy added charms make his much tribute more,
And what thou owest is paid by others' pain.

W. F. A. CHAMBERS.

SERVICE AT CAMP NINE.

BY HAROLD BALDWIN.

FROM the visitors' pew in the village church I looked over the well-fed, well-dressed congregation. How peaceful and orderly it was! How easy it must be to preach there. The English sky pilot sure had a cinch. Plump, ruddy, in immaculate vestments he intoned the stately words. Then he raised one white hand and, with a rush, the gesture carried me back twenty years. I sat once more among the hard-bitten lumberjacks of Camp Nine, 'way up in the northern Canadian woods, north of 60.

Heavens! it was cold that January day when the young parson blew in. Fifty below zero and a mean, little breeze blowing. At every breath you inhaled tiny knives of ice. All day long the sun had shone brilliantly, guarded on either side by the sundogs that always meant intense cold. At last the long coyote yell that signalled 'quittin' time' brought the teams thundering down the tote road to camp. Swampers poured down tributary ice roads. Through powdery, thigh-deep snow, sawyers wallowed out of the depths of black spruce to join the moccasined procession. Darkness came down, despite the stars, black as the funnel of a tornado. It bit at the nerves as the frost bit at the flesh. An unfortunate day for a sky pilot to amble in!

I crunched along one rut in the squeaking snow, Virginia level with me in the other. So impenetrable was the darkness we could not see each other. Round a corner lights appeared suddenly, silhouetting the smoke from the stovepipe of the bunk-house. A foot above the roof of the shack, the column of smoke broke off short as if cut by an invisible knife and stowed into an invisible black bag. We were at camp.

The nails which held the tarpaper covering to the boards of the bunk-house door were always great white powder-puffs of frost. They showed fairy-like for an instant as the door opened to admit a bunch of stamping men. A great cloud of vapour hung for a second after each opening; it disappeared as the hot air met the frightful outer cold, and froze. Diving through the steam cloud we plunged to steaming warmth, to food, light and relaxation;

a period of coma that merged at the early bedtime into unconsciousness. Material joys were the only joys of that existence.

I followed Virginia over to the roaring, log-devouring heater to thaw the icicles from my beard—I was only twenty but even the rawest recruit soon learnt not to attempt the agony of shaving frost-bitten cheeks. The frozen tears melted from my eyelashes and sizzled on the stove. Glaring sun on dazzling snow forces tears to the eyes and biting frost fixes them there.

I looked round for a place on the bench where Virginia already sat, to pull off my moccasins and the knee-high socks, with their gaudy frayed tassels, that I had been young enough to fall for when we 'came in' last October. These pathetic bits of finery had expressed my pride in holding down my first man's job.

There was a strange hush over the bunk-house, I felt nervously, and a low growl followed the hush, the growl of blasphemously disapproving men. Then I saw the reason for the menacing growl. A tall man in semi-clerical garb stood over on the other side of the heater. His cheeks were smooth and shaven, not marred by frost-bite and shaggy like ours. His hair was glossy and neatly parted over his handsome head. His nails were clean and perfect, not split and splayed and blackened like ours. Instinctively, I too resented his presence. What was he doing, so neat and trim and comfortable, in that rough haunt of toiling men—the toughest bunch in all the lumbering game? I turned for enlightenment as usual to Virginia,—he was 'Virginia' in the camp (just as I was 'English') because he hailed from that State. I never knew his real name and I doubt if he ever heard mine, but I adored him as only a boy can adore the man he idolises.

Virginia's drawl answered my whispered, 'Who's he?'

'Waal, I dunno zackly, but I reckon he's a green preacher, son, just like you're a green lumberman.'

'But,' I persisted, 'what does he want to come here for?'

'Waal,' Virginia's drawl was more deliberate than ever, 'I reckon it's because he works for the Anglican mission just like you and me works for the Fairfax Lumber Co. And his boss sends him to try his hand on the "benighted men that follow the woods" just like Ed. hollers to us to "get them sticks out."'

'But he's not going to preach here,' I said in amazement.

'Naow,' drawled Virginia with his queer sideways smile, 'I reckon he ain't, but he don't know it yet, son.'

'Clang! Clang! Clangity Clang!' the raucous sound drowned

my further protest. The cook was calling Camp Nine to supper by smiting a piece of suspended railway metal with a steel rod. It was a welcome summons. Every man there was ravenous. The whole crew, top-loaders, straw-pushes, sawyers, teamsters, swampers, handy men and tank men, poured into the cook shack and flung itself down at the tables. Dead silence fell, for there is no talking allowed to interrupt the serious work of eating at a lumber camp. The grim, dangerous toil, often performed in waist-deep snow, demanded vast supplies of fuel for the bodies that defied both toil and cold. And at Camp Nine we stoked with grim determination. It cost something to belong to the camp that boasted the toughest crew and the biggest output of logs in all the thirty outfits owned by the company. Ed. Flewell, the foreman, kept us up to it, and he saw that we kept fit enough to keep up to it. Any unnecessary word at table was silenced by the clang of the bullcook's warning steel rod.

We had reached the stage where vast wedges of raisin pie were swilled down by mighty draughts of boiling tea, when the rod clanged in vain. A great shout of rude laughter shook the cook shack to its ridge pole. For one horrid moment I thought I had done something 'green' again. But no, Virginia was laughing too, and he never laughed when they baited me. The joke, I soon saw, was on the preacher.

The cookees had ushered him to a place between Iowa Dick and Ole Larson. Politely Iowa was handing the treacle to the preacher, but the vessel in which the syrup was proffered was the preacher's expensive fur cap. Inverted, Iowa placed it carefully in front of the visitor, full to the brim with the juice of the maple. Not all the bullcook's furious clanging and stentorian blasphemy could keep the shouting crew from crowding over to see the hilarious sight.

The preacher's face was set, but he said nothing and the meal finished in silence broken now and then by a reminiscent, choking guffaw.

As we returned to the bunk-house Virginia paid his tribute to the preacher's self-command.

'Too bad, English,' he drawled. 'The guy's got guts, but his hands are too white and his face is too pink. Poor devil.'

'Why,' I asked curiously, 'what'll they do to him?'

Virginia only shrugged his magnificent shoulders as we entered and strolled over to join Trinity and Sailor Jones. 'Sailor' had once been some sort of big shot in the British Navy, so it was said,

and Trinity came from some college or other of that name, but it was not on account of either of those facts that they were respected in Camp Nine.

The four of us rolled cigarettes and waited. As the preacher came in he must have felt the gathering hostility in the air, but the man was game to his straight backbone. If only he had been as wise as he was bold! But, alas! he held up one white hand for silence, and immediately the shanty rocked with a roar of furious voices.

'Get ta hell outa here and take them lily mitts with you!' was the mildest of the objurgations that filled the room. Ribald questions as to his manicurist and still lewder suggestions concerning his own black-skirted effeminacy were met with white-faced, motionless fortitude and the white hand remained upraised. Slowly there stole over the husky men an unwilling acknowledgment of the one quality that could command their respect. The guy, as Virginia said, had guts. But when he spoke he spoiled all. His accents were too musical, too refined.

'Boys,' he said in his too cultured voice, 'how about a little singing? A hymn or two? Then I should like to talk to you for a few minutes. I won't keep you long.'

'Damned right you won't.'

It was the top-loader who spoke and Camp Nine watched as he swaggered up to the preacher carrying his two hundred-odd pounds with the cat-foot grace of a prowling tiger. Camp Nine watched and listened, for in the lumber camp the foreman is the 'push' but the top-loader is king. For months on end he daily risked those great agile limbs of his upon the skidways. Over every log or bunch of logs that rumbled to the top of that mounting pile he leaped lightly and surely as he snubbed them into place and the tailing chains were drawn back to encircle another load. His peavey must swing and snub its sharp bill into each log, releasing it with the speed of a striking snake as he sprang to give place to it. He must keep the jamming team and cable working in perfect time with the 'tailers down' and the teamsters who everlastingly hauled in the logs from the toiling swamper. A top-loader's voice, feet, hands and brain had to work in perfect unison every second of his working day, and his life depended on their accuracy. Through the tobacco smoke and the steam Camp Nine watched as he and the preacher faced each other. An oblong black object at the sky pilot's feet caught the top's eye.

'What the hell have you got there?' he demanded, and the preacher had the sense to recognise that there was only curiosity in the question. To Camp Nine it was phrased with astonishing politeness.

'That is my little portable organ. We can have a little music, you see, and then . . .'

'Huh,' interrupted the top, grinning, 'Say, feller, you're the guy we bin looking fer. Can youse crank a dance tune outa that there mangle?'

'Why yes,' came the courteous reply. 'I suppose I could chord for you to dance if you wish.'

'What say, boys, do we "wish" a stag?' He mimicked the finicking pronunciation of the word.

'Shore, we wish,' came the answering roar in a shout of subservient laughter that the top's jest could always command. Nowhere are class distinctions better marked than in a lumber camp where the swamper is under dog and the sawyers are the bourgeoisie.

Once more the lily hand was raised. 'I'll chord for your stag,' said the preacher, smiling, 'on condition that you listen to me afterwards. Is it a bargain?'

'Shore,' came the ready roar. 'Romp 'er up, feller.'

'Fill up the floor,' roared the top in a stentorian bellow. 'Ladies to the right, gents to the left,' and the beauty and chivalry of Camp Nine took the floor.

The preacher pulled out his tiny instrument as a man pulls out a telescope and sat down before it. Gallant "gents" bowed ceremoniously before coy, bearded "ladies," who rapidly performed their evening toilet by pulling their shirts outside their pants for identification. Henderson, the half-breed, vaulted over the heater, touching its scorching top lightly with his foot as he sailed across, and seized Sailor Jones by the arm.

'C'mon, dearie! Our dance.'

Instantly the floor was a maelstrom of cavorting men and the bunk-house shook with the furious impact of feet. A few wall-flowers on the seats added their tramping to the thunderous rhythm. Yells and catcalls, roaring voices and ear-splitting whistling, the loud reports of hardened palms clapping in unison, all went to testify that a 'stag' dance was in progress in Camp Nine. I was not surprised to see the door slide open and Ed. Flewell, the foreman, loom through the cloud of steam like a viking from a burning ship. The fun was good-humoured, but any minute a fight might

be precipitated and knocked-out men wouldn't keep up the Camp's tally of logs.

Faster and faster wheezed the little organ as the preacher's knees worked furiously up and down about the level of his ears. Concertinas, mouth organs and melodeons appeared on the side lines as one relay of dancers relieved another, for the thunder of feet never slackened. The preacher's white hands flashed over the keys and when he stopped for an instant the voices took up some ribald parody till he was fain to drown it with the favourite Turkey in the Straw. It was Trinity's clear tenor that, at one interval, sang of a mythical Happy Land:

'Where you never work at all
Nor even change your socks,
But little streams of Black and White
Come rippling down the rocks.'

At another, Iowa Dick was called on to dance the Red River Jig. Iowa had danced in vaudeville once.

At last, with perspiration streaming down his ruddy cheeks, the sky pilot stood up and waited for the storm of protest to subside. Ed. drew his watch out and looked at it significantly. The hurtling curses changed to a roar of laughter.

'Shoot!' they yelled derisively to the sky pilot who once more stood with uplifted hand.

'Boys, I've done my part. Now will you do yours?'

'Shore we will. Shoot!'

But before he could obey the invitation, the bullcook's clangorous summons sounded again.

'Five minutes!' he bellowed.

It was bedtime. In five minutes the lights would be turned out and every man in the bunks that lined the walls, tier above tier. Already some had disappeared into the topmost bunks and outer garments were hastily being ripped off. The preacher stared aghast and a voice from the farthest bunk jeered, 'Come back in June, feller. We'll have more time to listen to yer line of salvation.'

'Nine o'clock,' intoned the bullcook and stretched his hand to the nearest of the lights. But Ed. stopped him.

'Boys!' The 'push' was no orator in cold blood, but he did his best. 'The sky pilot has entertained us some to-night, even if we didn't have the pleasure of hearing the service. How about

a little donation to the Mission? The clerk kin ramble round and he'll take what you wanta give off yer checks, huh?'

'Donate? Shore! Damned well worth it!' The camp was in high spirits, and the clerk quickly filled his list of quarters and half-dollars.

Suddenly from the farther corner of the bunk-house came the ominous growl that heralded trouble—whether fight or frolic—in Camp Nine. The growl grew to a roar like that of a log jam beginning to break, as the men crowded round the hombre who had refused to 'cough up.' Poor devil, he probably hadn't sense enough to know his danger. The top, as usual, assumed command.

'Up with him, boys!' he roared, and hauled the astonished swamper from the bunk with a single heave.

In a trice a blanket was flipped from the bunk and its edges ringed with brawny hands. The dissenter lay, still stupefied with the suddenness of the attack, supine in the centre.

'One! Two! Three! Hep!' counted the top-loader.

Up went the luckless swamper, all sprawling arms and legs, in the air, his fingers clawing in a futile effort to grasp something. Up he went to the long stringer that supported the rafters, and down again into the blanket. With another 'hep!' he shot upwards again hitting the stringer with a soft bump.

'Hold on, now, fellers,' ordered the top at the third toss. 'If that ain't loosened two bits from him, we drop him across the heater next.'

With the howl of a badgered animal, the man signified his willingness to part. Roughly he was dumped out of the blanket, too dizzy to stand and would have fallen but that Virginia stepped forward and supported him with one iron-sinewed arm.

'That's enough,' he said quietly as ever, and even the skidway king acknowledged the command in his tone. More than one hoped he would take up the challenge that was plain for all to hear. It was a standing question in the camp whether Virginia could 'handle' the top, and before the winter was out they were to see the point settled in a Homeric fight. But it was not to be to-night.

'Two bits?' suggested Virginia to the dazed victim of the hold-up. 'Might as well,' he drawled and the man nodded hastily.

'Yah,' he growled to the clerk as he clambered into his bunk again, and the twenty-five-cent donation was duly entered.

Next morning the sky pilot appeared from Ed's shack, where he had been rudely quartered, prepared for the gruelling drive that

lay before him. Miles of tote road to the landing on the river, and a hundred and fifty on the highway afterwards. Yet starting was delayed. Early as he was, the boys had had time to show him a few attentions. The teamsters had carefully taken apart every buckle of his harness and set his cutter astride the ridge of the barn. As his horses were released from the barn, primed with a double feed of corn, they flung up their heels and sped squealing and kicking into the bush. Even the storekeeper found unexpected difficulty in producing a new fur cap that would fit the preacher, and rude, ironic comments on the effect of each misfit greeted his patient trying-on.

Suddenly they relented, some ran to catch the spirited drivers and harness them to the retrieved cutter. The teamsters admired good horseflesh and had groomed the team to shining-coated perfection. When the rig finally took the tote road they raised a cheer that startled the coyotes on the hill and re-echoed among the 'big sticks' like the roll of thunder as Camp Nine resumed its labours, both edified and diverted by the service which though it could hardly claim the epithet 'divine,' still had not altogether failed of its effect.

Saskatchewan.

DESERT IDYLLS.

III. MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS.

BY MAJOR C. S. JARVIS.

*'... a desert stretched and stricken, left and right, left and right
Where the piled mirages thicken under white hot light. ...'*

—RUDYARD KIPLING.

SINAI's chief claim to renown is that it was the site of the Wanderings of the Israelites, and those who have seen only that part of the Peninsula which lies on the east bank of the Suez Canal wonder why Moses selected it as an area in which to wander. My first experience of Sinai dates back to 1917 when I passed through it with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and at that time I was inclined to agree with the Australian Light Horseman's summing up, viz., that it consisted of 'miles and miles and ruddy miles of damn all.' If anyone had prophesied when I returned to it five years later as sub-Governor that I should spend the next twelve years of my life in Sinai I should probably have contemplated suicide very seriously as being the simplest and most painless solution.

The coastal belt with its sand-dune and sand-plain country is deadly boring and monotonous, except for the actual shore, and even a blue Mediterranean washing up perpetually on a yellow beach, though picturesque and idyllic the first time one sees it, palls beyond words after a while. One pines for rocks and seaweed and, last but not least, sea smells—that salty tang one notices on the English coast at low tide. The only time when there is any appreciable odour on the Sinai shore is during the shark-fishing season when dismemberment of the fish is carried out on the beach—and this has to be smelt to be believed.

Sinai, like a Savile Row tailor, however, does not display its goods in the shop window for all to see, and I discovered that, though the northern belt is uninteresting, there is a very definite charm about the hilly gravel plateau that lies beyond, whilst in the towering granite mountains of the south that come down sheer

to the ultramarine of the Akaba Gulf there is some of the finest scenery in the world. Also it is not a desert in the accepted sense of the word, as it experiences a varying rainfall every winter that in ordinary years is sufficient to sustain a considerable amount of scrub and tamarisk bushes even in the mountainous area in the south, and occasionally there is an abnormally wet winter which results in the whole of the Peninsula—with the exception of the sand-dune country—wearing a mantle of green for two short spring months with cornfields in the wadi-beds and wheat and barley five feet high and ears six inches long.

Sinai has two distinct types of inhabitants—the Arishia, the natives of the town of El Arish, who are spreading all over the north of the Peninsula, and the Arab or Beduin who as nomads live and have their being in the high desert. The Arishia are an extraordinary race, as the town started as a convict settlement in the early dynasties of Egypt and since then practically every nation in the Near East has contributed specimens owing to stragglers falling out from invading and retiring armies and pilgrim caravans. During the Crusades Baldwin maintained an outpost at El Arish, and their descendants, who are now called the Bardawils, are a thriving community, whilst Napoleon's troops during their year's stay in the town in 1799 left an unmistakable mark on the inhabitants. The Turks used to maintain a Bosnian garrison in the fort during the early part of the nineteenth century and, owing to their failure to maintain a system of reliefs for time-expired men, ex-soldiers had perforce to settle in the village and quite one-third of the people are from this stock. During the late War even El Arish received some recruits in this fashion and the present Government mason is an ex-Turkish conscript from Tripoli.

The result of this weird mixture is a sturdy, virile race with a marked propensity for hard work but an extraordinarily crooked, suspicious outlook on life generally. This is probably due to the fact that, being the inhabitants of a frontier town in the desert, they were harried and exploited by their Turkish Governors who in those days were appointed without salary on the understanding that they made what they could out of the people, and it is still extremely difficult to get them to believe that the Government is anything but a ravening wolf out of which no good but much evil may come. They are easily a match for the Arab in wits and, being hard-working and avaricious, have managed to absorb, wangle, and extreat from their Beduin neighbours practically every

tract of land that has any value for cultivation. The Arab has only himself to blame for this state of affairs as he is so hopelessly indolent and haphazard in his methods that he enters willingly into some intricate partnership with a member of the town by means of which he draws groceries in lieu of rent for his land and finds, after he has consumed a few pounds of tea and half a sack of sugar, that he has sold his birthright and all his land. So long as there are Esaus in the East, so long will there be Jacobs to obtain their birthrights in exchange for a mess of pottage.

The Beduins of Sinai are mostly offshoots from the big Arabian tribes in the Hedjaz and as such are of the purest descent and of first-class Arab stock, but they are undeniably the most striking examples of decadent and decayed gentility in the world. Their poverty is beyond belief, for only the wealthiest possess tents and the average assets of a Sinai Arab are a decrepit camel, four goats, two sheep, an iron cooking-pot and the clothes he stands up in. An Arab can exist on a cup of goat's milk a day or if that fails can keep body and soul together by chewing raw barley, husk and all. Nevertheless, he does not forget that he is of gentle birth and gets extremely excited if a female member of his family contemplates marriage with a descendant of one of the erstwhile black slaves of the tribes. It is most amusing to hear a very grimy, dishevelled old gentleman who has never washed in his life, and whose garments consist of a shred of white calico turned pepper-and-salt colour by flea-marks, holding forth at great length on the indignity his family will suffer if his niece should marry a rank outsider—a man of no birth. It would give Mr. Maxton and his Glasgow friends a terrible shock.

The Arab is not one of the world's workers, as all forms of manual labour are anathema, and in his opinion it is bad form for a man to soil his hands with a mattock or shovel. One realises this when one shakes hands with a member of this noble race for, instead of making contact with a horny, calloused palm as one would expect from a hairy desert-bred product, one touches skin as soft as silk—softer and silkier even than the palm of a Society beauty who spends every morning of her life in a manicurist's parlour.

The Arab works about ten days out of the three hundred and sixty-five: during the autumn rains he spends five days ploughing a stretch of suitable desert for his barley crop and yokes to the plough any pair of animals he possesses, i.e. two camels if he is a man of substance, if not a camel and a donkey, occasionally a

donkey
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donkey and a goat, and rarely his wife and daughter. His plough is a bent piece of wood with a sharpened point and is precisely the same in every way as the plough used three thousand or more years ago. In the spring he and his family put in another five days harvesting the crop and, judging by his equanimity if the barley is a complete failure owing to drought, one can only come to the conclusion that he is on the whole pleased, as the awful necessity of garnering the corn is thereby obviated and moreover he will have no tax to pay—the fact that he will also have to go hungry does not worry him at the time. This is typical of the race, for I have never met any people who live so entirely in the present as they do—the future worries them not a jot and with them time is not a dimension, it is merely a state of mind. If the store of flour is sufficient only for to-day's food why worry as the problem will not become acute for at least twenty-four hours and it will be time enough then to start doing something about it. How different it is with us—in every paper we pick up we see Assurance Companies' advertisements asking the impertinent and chilling question whether we have made safeguards for the future or not, and the problem of providing not only for to-morrow but for twenty years' hence has probably filled more graves prematurely than anything else.

The Arabs rely to a very large extent on their milch animals for their food supply, and on the coastal belt, where there is a certain amount of grass, they possess small but very degenerate cows about the size of Dexters, whilst all over the desert they run equally degenerate goats. Considering the nature of their food supply—parched scrub bushes—one could not expect them to be anything else but degenerate, still, with a view to improving the stock, I started my administrative duties by applying for a stud bull and a stud goat. I emphasised particularly the fact that the bull must be extremely small as our cows were no larger than donkeys and in due course there arrived the most colossal monster I have ever seen. It stood about sixteen hands at the withers, had the shoulders of an elephant, weighed a matter of a ton and a half, and could have knocked the biggest rhinoceros out in the first round. Our Lilliputian cows on seeing him gave one strangled bellow and bolted with tails erect—apparently in the bovine world there are limits to the size that 'he men' may attain, and the bull, having scared ten years' growth out of every cow in Sinai, was eventually sold to the butcher.

The stud goat that arrived later was even more startling as it was a most obscene-looking beast with staring blue eyes, one of which squinted, a mouth set on one side, and an underhung jaw. Its colour was an unhealthy brindle and its hindquarters fell away behind so that at first glance I thought it was a hyæna sent to improve the breed of these animals, but when it uttered a husky alcoholic 'baa' I realised that it was a goat, and if further proof were required there was the smell, and this was so unmistakable that it was necessary to stand up-wind of the beast when discussing his points. Apparently he was quite as distasteful to nanny-goats as to human beings and appeared to be entirely lacking in sex-appeal. Incidentally, he proved among other things to be completely sterile, but the El Arish butcher—a man not above dealing in choice cuts from diseased old baggage camels—refused to have anything to do with our stud goat and he was eventually given away to a passing Arab from Nejd. It seemed unlikely that a man would walk all the way from Central Arabia just to return us an animal that failed to come up to expectation.

For some unexplained reason, novelists and scenario writers—particularly the American variety—have depicted the Arab as being a hero of romance and a lady-killer, and we are all familiar with those films where a hawk-nosed 'sheek' with a pronounced Yankee twang and well-cut riding-breeches and boots carries off a not very reluctant blonde on a typical American horse wearing a Mexican saddle. This is hard luck on the Arab, for actually he is not in the least degree interested in white women. He regards them from very much the same standpoint as our Victorian grandmothers, who survived the War, regarded the short-skirted, cocktail-drinking young women of 1925. In other words, he is terribly shocked, not to say frightened, but being a gentleman by birth and a past-master at hiding his feelings, he gives no indication of his opinions. He no doubt thinks that if the extraordinary freedom enjoyed by European girls ever extends to his own womenfolk it means that the whole fabric of his care-free existence as lord and master will crash about his ears, and that is unthinkable. His wife might one day refuse to walk five miles to the well and back to fetch water for the camp and tell him to do it himself or go thirsty—she might even go Bolshy and throw the pot at his head. His attitude towards white women, therefore, though respectful to a degree, is definitely disapproving.

One day there came wandering into Sinai, accompanied by a

particularly poisonous-looking Levantine guide, a highly-decorative American lady, who stated that she was a cinema actress in search of local colour and ideas. She seemed to be the last person who would wish to ride a camel in search of ideas or anything else and I had vague suspicions, which were confirmed later, when telephone messages came in from different police posts to the effect that a white woman had been carried off by Arabs. Patrols dashed off in every direction, but the scare ended when an angry and dishevelled woman was brought into the nearest police post by a still angrier Sheikh. According to her story—which she told with strange lack of conviction—her camp had been rushed by wild Arabs and she had been carried off bound on a camel by a 'sheek.' The old sheikh, who was well known to me as a gentleman of irreproachable morals, told a very different story. According to his account this woman, who was doubtless one of God's afflicted, had forced herself into his camp, had made herself most objectionable, and had refused to leave when politely requested to do so. He was therefore forced, much against his will, and for his own protection, to bring her in and hand her over to the police—and if there was any possibility of further white women forcing themselves into his tent could he have a special police post to guard him from interference. The lady's carefully-staged publicity stunt had crashed rather ignominiously, but though I succeeded in preventing any highly-coloured versions appearing in the English Press for her advertisement, I believe that some wonderful accounts of her hairbreadth escape were printed in America.

Owing to the fact that Sinai is the smugglers' highway, the police of the Peninsula are far more numerous than is the case in other deserts of Egypt. Like the British Channel fishermen in the early part of the nineteenth century, every Arab is a smuggler when he sees the opportunity and a considerable proportion of the hashish—the forbidden narcotic so popular in Egypt—is brought from Syria and Turkey across the Sinai desert. The Arabs have a variety of methods of carrying the drug—sometimes a large armed party on camels set out in the hope of being strong enough to drive off any police patrol, but the hue and cry usually becomes so intense that by the time they have reached the vicinity of the Canal a matter of 150 police and Camel Corps have concentrated on the party and a rifle battle takes place in which the smugglers lose their camels, hashish, and several men. Sometimes they walk across, carrying a small parcel in the hope of escaping detection, and

occasionally they hide the hashish in the soles of their sandals or in hollowed-out receptacles in the camel saddles.

A particularly clever dodge was adopted one year in the month of January, when the coats of the camels are long and woolly. A large consignment of camels from Nejd passed the Palestine-Sinai frontier on its way to the Nile Valley, where there is a big demand for this meat among the working classes, and among the upper classes also, judging by a weird whitish flesh that appears all-too-frequently on the menus as *Veau* in the leading hotels in Cairo. The caravan was passed as all correct by the police post at the frontier, but twenty miles farther on it met a patrol who again examined them. One of the police was struck by the very fine quality white wool that adorned a certain camel's hump and said casually he would like some with which to make an *agal* (head rope). The merchant in charge protested so vigorously and fluently that the policeman's suspicions were aroused: he rode after the camel, gripped a handful of wool, gave a tug, and away came the whole handful, on the inner side of which was stuck a large slab of hashish. The rest of the caravans were then examined and it was found that on every camel six large holes had been cut in the wool by hair clippers—on to the bare skin was stuck, by means of glue, a slab of hashish and the wool had then been affixed to the other side of the slab by the same method, the hair being carefully combed together afterwards so that detection was absolutely impossible unless one ran one's fingers into the animal's coat. The policeman who made the discovery received a reward of over £70 which to him was wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, and I have often wondered if he really deserved it. Despite his emphatic evidence that his suspicions were aroused by the merchant's manner when he suggested a little wool for a head-dress, I rather suspect that it was his anger that was aroused and that he tugged out a handful of wool to show the camel man that if he, a policeman, wanted something he was going to have it, protests or no protests.

The police force are recruited from the local Arabs and Arishia and are an extremely smart and efficient body of men. It was very difficult at first to persuade applicants that life in the police force was strenuous, discipline extremely strict and the work most exacting. They had an idea that enlisting in the police meant being clothed and fed at Government expense and nothing else, and quite decrepit creatures with beards and wall eyes would come to my office and offer to join. On my pointing out to them they

were not up to the standard required, they have smiled deprecatingly and said that they quite understood that, but they had not come with the idea of doing any serious police work, or causing anyone inconvenience—far from it; all they wanted was to 'akl eysh' (eat bread, i.e. live) at Government expense and nothing else. Another type of applicant would urge ingenuously as his special recommendation that he had four wives and sixteen children and found it absolutely impossible to provide for them all in his present employment. Much against his inclination, therefore, it had become necessary for him to apply to join the police. As he merely wanted the pay and not the work he would be no trouble to anyone.

In addition to the police there is a Gendarmerie force of Sudanese Camel Corps who were raised and trained years ago by a Scots Guardsman and who still move with the Guardsman's stamp and jump. They are extremely smart—and incidentally they are most intolerant of any force not up to their standard of smartness. On one occasion I had to go to Akaba to collect a large sum of money—a blood fine owing to one of the Sinai tribes. In those days Akaba was part of the Hedjaz and was administered—or, to be more exact, maladministered—by that Government. I had reason to believe that the blood-money had been collected from the Hedjaz Arabs but that the officials in Akaba were sitting on it and would not deliver it up without pressure. By sending down officers from time to time I might manage to extract some of it in small instalments, but this method is too expensive and trying to Occidental nerves and I resolved to get the whole lot in one swoop.

The Orient is the home of pomp and outward display, and it is not a bit of use hiding your light under a bushel east of Suez; I estimated that one of my officers with two men might be given £25, that I myself with ten men might get £100, but to collect the full £800 I must travel with at least eighty men and try intimidation as well as ostentation. To make sure I set off with 100 Camel Corps, every man dressed in faultlessly cut khaki smocks and wearing on their heads jaunty turbans set off with a flash of leopard-skin on the left side. They were mounted on marvellous white trotting camels and their accoutrements glistened in the sun. In other words, we were an extremely smart and imposing force.

The Officer commanding at Akaba had had an hour's notice of my arrival—I did not wish to give him more for fear he should send off the money to Yambo or some inaccessible spot—and being very uneasy in his mind as to what my exact intentions were he had

turned out a guard of honour to greet and propitiate me. It was standing, or rather lolling, in front of the old ruined fort in the town and was, without doubt, the weirdest and most pantomimic force I have ever seen. In front stood an enormously fat Syrian officer, around whose midships the Sam Browne belt would not meet and the deficiency had been hastily made up by string. His khaki uniform was filthy and his trousers shoved into sagging yellow boots that had never known polish. Behind were two rows of scarecrows—ragged Arabs, some wearing Arab smocks, some clad in old Turkish jackets minus the buttons, some in trousers, and some in skirts, whilst the head-dresses varied between the Turkish Kalpack, the Arab shawl, and the British sun-helmet worn back to front. They were truly a terrific sight, but, realising the Hedjaz was doing its best, I bit my lip and hoped the Sudanese behind were doing the same—albeit the Sudanese lip is a good bit bigger than the British variety.

My Officer gave the order 'Carry arms and eyes left,' and the Syrian Officer replied by shouting something that he thought meant 'Present arms,' but which evidently meant something else. In any case, the tatterdemalions behind him went through a series of violent contortions with their rifles and ended up with a series of crashes as most of the arms fell from their unpractised fingers to the ground. I breathed a fervent prayer that my Sudanese would hold fast and keep their faces straight and all went well till half our column had passed the guard, then I heard a squeak as one man fought back a laugh. I turned round to suppress any regrettable display of mirth—for if laughter is infectious an ineffectual attempt to suppress it is infinitely more so—but I was too late, every black face suddenly split across with a white flash of teeth and there came a raucous crash of deep African laughter, than which there is nothing heartier in the whole world. It was all very lamentable and was probably the only case on record of a guard of honour provided by a friendly foreign Power being greeted by unseemly and riotous mirth. Nevertheless, bad manners or not, we returned with our £800 and Camel Corps drill sergeants, when they wish to be particularly caustic to a batch of backward recruits, still liken them to a Hedjaz guard of honour.

With the object of improving stock and agricultural products generally, I obtained a grant of £100 and initiated an Agricultural Exhibition to be run on the same lines as the small poultry and vegetable shows held in rural England. Every type of animal and

bird kept by the natives, and every conceivable product from bread to needlework was to be shown in the hope that a healthy spirit of rivalry might be fostered which would result in a general improvement in Sinai's meagre stock and products. I was too successful over the first part of the idea as the spirit of rivalry that I engendered became definitely unhealthy, so that the police had to protect some of the prize-winners from the unsuccessful competitors; but whether any general improvement resulted is another question—the fact remains, everybody enjoyed himself immensely.

A very amusing episode occurred when I explained the scheme beforehand to a large gathering of Sheikhs who were to assist me by advertising the Show among the people of their tribes and encourage them to enter their animals in the various classes. The Arabic word for Exhibition is 'marad' with the first 'a' long, but unfortunately the same word with the first 'a' short means epidemic, and a virulent epidemic like bubonic plague, cholera, or smallpox. I got the two words muddled up and announced in all sincerity to the gathering that in a fortnight's time there was going to be a very big epidemic at El Arish.

There were exclamations of horror and alarm which puzzled me considerably.

'Can this be true?' asked one old Sheikh in a trembling voice.

'Yes, it is perfectly true,' I replied, 'and I wish this epidemic to be the biggest thing there has ever been in Egypt, and I expect you to help me with it and see that all your people are in it.'

This sounded so bloodthirsty and alarming that the Sheikhs began to mutter to each other and then one turned to me and asked: 'Why is this to happen?'

'Because the Government desires it,' I replied.

Well, that more or less settled it. The Government was all-powerful, of course, and if it really meant to wipe out the entire population of Sinai with a compulsory epidemic of plague, and the Sheikhs were to be called upon to assist presumably by getting the people inoculated with the disease, there was nothing for it—an epidemic there must be. And then a shy and retiring Egyptian clerk explained to me most politely that, owing to the crass stupidity of the Arabs, they had mistaken my faultless pronunciation and thought the word I had used was 'marad' (epidemic), whereas of course I had really said 'maarad' (exhibition). Whereupon, with roars of relieved laughter on all sides, the meeting came to a satisfactory conclusion.

These words that have a totally different meaning according to whether one uses a long or a short 'a' are all too common in Arabic and lead to misunderstandings that are sometimes amusing and occasionally serious. For instance, the word 'hammam' means a pigeon or a bath, and the difference in pronunciation of the two words is so slight that to a European they are both the same, but to the Arab they are totally different. An officer staying in one of the Rest Houses in Sinai asked for a bath and the non-commissioned officer in charge of the post solemnly led him, clad in his dressing-gown and carrying towel and sponge, through the garden and stable-yard to the cote in which the Government carrier pigeons were installed. A more serious mistake occurred over the word 'massaheen' which means surveyors and 'massageen' which means prisoners—the only difference in the two words in the Arabic language being a dot under the 'h' which turns it into a 'g.' A telegram was sent one day to inform me that three surveyors were arriving by train and should be met, but telegraphists have a haphazard method of putting in the dots, which mean so much in the Arabic language, and a dot belonging to another letter had strayed from its proper place, so that the telegram actually informed me that three prisoners were arriving. There is only one way to meet prisoners and that is with a guard and not a guard of honour, and the mistake was not rectified till I had been to the lock-up and released three very incensed Egyptian surveyors who had been hauled out of the train, handcuffed, and deposited under lock and key despite their frenzied protests that they had come to measure the land for crop assessment.

The life of an Administrator in the desert is not quite so featureless and unvaried as the country he rules, and every day brings forth a new problem, for the solution of which no hard and fast rule exists. Sinai is as old as time and in the course of its checkered history has seen Governors from many races—Hebrews, Assyrians, Persians, Romans, Crusaders, etc. They have served their term, made their laws, and passed on. 'The dog barks, but the caravan moves slowly through the night.'

MONTREAL.

BY ELEANOR WILLIAMS-MOORE.

THERE was no horizon, the mist had swallowed it as it had swallowed everything except the immediate rim of trees on the summit of the mountain. As there was no disturbing wind, mist and sky melted together and hung loosely like a pale grey mantilla over the earth. Horses and riders appeared suddenly out of it, trod daintily the brown velvet ribbon bridle-paths for a time, only to disappear again into the mist as suddenly as they had come.

In the long autumn grasses a full orchestra of crickets and other insects piped for the promised rain. The wild flowers were quite untouched by an early frost. There were small white daisies, stiff yarrow and golden-rod; tall Michaelmas daisies and tiny yellow snapdragons, thirsty mouths opened wide for moisture. On the hard paths amber-coloured beech leaves and pine-needles made a pad to soften footfalls. Occasionally a hawthorn tree dropped its load of ripe fruit in a dizzy pattern of red jewels. Fluffy grey creatures streaked past as they hurried from one hunting-ground to another, busily engaged in burying the winter's supply of food.

Green was still the dominant colour in the scheme. One maple tree was all green but for a branch which extended across a road with a startling display of flame red, orange and yellow, at hazard like the suit of a jester. A black ash trembled slightly with delicate allure as I passed by, thereby drawing attention to the change in her costume; it was now a party frock of green chiffon through which pale yellow satin glimmered. In a dell near the Chalet a family of silver birches had unanimously decided to don russet together. But the oak trees were stubbornly determined not to alter their dark green costumes, nevertheless, here and there a self-opinionated leaf had changed to a rich bronze tone. Although there was no motion of air to disturb them, leaves and pine-needles continued to fall softly and aerially down to their last resting-place.

The long silences above the insects' murmur were disconnected at intervals by an uplifted child voice; a clatter of hoofs as rider and horse crossed the carriage road and clambered swiftly up a steep hillside, only to race madly away out of sight; or by the

clop-clop and clink-clink as a cab carried its load to the look-out. The stone house of the park ranger was covered with Virginia creeper in shades of amethyst, and from the surrounding garden flowers of every colour and perfume lifted up their last gorgeous appeal. On a low wall morning-glories trumpeted triumphantly in tones of blue and red. A near-by poplar standing austere apart from its fellows, clung a little sadly to leaves whose edges were black and curled, like fingers of a hand stricken by some dread disease.

Below the look-out a dream city wavered in the mist. Harsh lines of stone and brick softly melted in the grace and poetry of a new element. Old dimensions were lost, new ones formed. The sun burst through a crack in the grey mantilla, but swiftly the folds drew together again. Obscurity reigned over the last Sunday morning in September.

Two days later the sun was hot with the intensity of summer, the mountain-top lay drowning in its golden flood. From west to east rode the wind, moving dry leaves with rustling torment in its restless vigour. Chickadee-dee-dee, summer is here to stay! Caw-caw, caw-caw, winter is just around the corner! From a sun-drenched hollow filled with ferns, warm perfumes of the earth poured forth. Song-sparrows twittered uneasily while they chased white moths.

A small boy halted his bicycle, leaning against it, dreaming in the sun. Two brown Greek babies toddled after a friaking squirrel. The corrugated bole of an oak was warm to the touch; I laid my cheek against it. The palmate leaves of a hickory tree were dim purple near the skyline, paling downwards into creamy white. A golden birch, now all golden-yellow, was rustling joyously. Poplar and cotton-wood trees took up the refrain, but a clump of mountain-ash drooped under their coats of many colours, in plaintive silence. Whisp-whisper, sighed dry maple leaves as they scampered across the dusty road, hurrying all together like a shoal of minnows. You could almost hear the evergreens laugh.

Shadows fell into entrancing patterns, moving as the wind moved. A young brown figure on a young brown horse blended with the scene. Nothing jarred. A funny little man out of a child's picture-book went by. His shabby hat and coat were the colour of the road. The coat was too large, the pockets too full; the coat sagged and the pockets bulged; while his beard like his shoes was long and curling at the tips. His eyes reflected the peace

about him. Black-clad seminary boys were walking with a song on their lips. Lovers, clasped arm-in-arm, helped each other over rough places . . . 'mais il fait beau.'

Clumps of trees on the far side of the St. Lawrence were clearly reflected in the still water. The two islands might almost have been sleeping, so quiet they lay in their grey-blue bed. Across the scene three yellow butterflies danced in gay response to the glamour of the sunshine. A softened roar from the restless congeries of buildings known as a city rose and fell with the shifting of the wind. Its busy-ness was being carried on with a curious disregard for yellow butterflies, cawing birds, changing leaves, vigorous wind, or glamorous warm sunshine on a mountain-top. Smoke poured from chimneys, and blew hither and thither caressingly about the city; different smoke from the thick white incense which rose from small funeral pyres close beneath the sky, and blessed by the sun. An old lame man tended them, gathering in more dead leaves, and still more, as they fell and fell.

The wind and sun were good on the mountain-top, and everyone seemed glad to be alive, on the mountain-top. We become more natural as we sit alone with nature; the trees, the grass and wild-flowers, the sun and the wind are so kind. All the madnesses of the noisy, crowded city are washed away. One is purified.

Montreal.

THE RUNNING BROOKS.

Walks and Talks : The Diary of a Member of Parliament in 1933-4 : Sir Arnold Wilson (Oxford University Press, 4s. n.).

Baker Street Studies : Edited by H. W. Bell (Constable, 7s. 6d. n.).

Coleridge : Edited by Edmund Blunden and Earl Leslie Griggs (Constable, 10s. 6d. n.).

The Laurel Bough : An Anthology of Verse, 1380-1932 : Selected by Edward B. Powley (Bell, 5s. n.).

Poems of Ten Years, 1924-1934 : Dorothy Wellesley (Macmillan, 8s. 6d. n.).

Tristram : Frank Kendon (Dent, 2s. 6d. n.).

It is a far cry to the days of Cobbett who was confessedly in the mind of Sir Arnold Wilson in connection with his *Walks and Talks* : but his example is one that should be enjoined by statute upon all Members of Parliament—to go among their constituents simply, talking to all and sundry and endeavouring with an open mind and a sympathetic heart to hear their problems and reflect upon the solutions. Of such a pilgrimage as Sir Arnold undertook between August, 1933, and January, 1934, a most valuable book could be made : and whilst this book has value it is not such as could be. It is, in fact, a little disappointing that a man of such ability and breadth of experience as the author should not, having once set his hand to such an undertaking, have produced a more valuable record. There is much in these pages of interest, something of poignancy and a little of humour, but it is too interrupted by literary allusions and quotations, the pilgrimage is too often interfered with by official parliamentary engagements or semi-official public dinners and so forth, and the talks are too disconnected, for the reader ever to be able to get, as he might well have hoped to do, a clear and enduring picture into his mind of the national life that is under observation. It is on the whole too directly the production of a parliamentarian and too little that of a dispassionate and acute investigator, and it ends appropriately for its purpose but a little disappointingly for the interest of the general reader—in a direct statement of political beliefs.

From realities, often rather stark, we turn to fancies, often very amusing. It is difficult to believe that some characters live only in books ; as was once said, it is as easy to believe that there was really once a person called Pickwick as it is hard to believe that there ever really was one called Bernard Shaw, and of all these book-lives none (not even Pickwick) are more vivid than the two

inhabitants of 221B, Baker Street. In *Baker Street Studies*, under the general editorship of that experienced biographer Mr. H. W. Bell, a number of clever students of the great pair contribute to the general mystification and amusement. Miss Dorothy Sayers leads off with the outrageous suggestion that Sherlock Holmes was indubitably a Cambridge man; her arguments are, as might be expected, extremely ingenious, but they appear to us to rest upon a fallacy: 'At Oxford,' says Miss Sayers, 'freshmen are at once allotted rooms in college; they reside there for two years and only move out into lodgings in the town at the beginning of their third year of residence. At Oxford, therefore, the biting of Holmes while on his way to chapel [by Victor Trevor's bull-dog] could not possibly,' etc., etc. Now this is arguing from the general to the particular: one reader at least has known many an Oxford undergraduate not in college during his first terms. Perish the thought that Oxford never taught that master of deduction, Sherlock Holmes! But there is worse to come: just after Father Ronald Knox has proved, apparently conclusively, that the explanation of the mystery of Mycroft Holmes is that he was in the pay of the arch-criminal, Professor Moriarty, Mr. A. G. Macdonell demonstrates with equal acumen and irrefutable logic that there never was an arch-criminal, Professor Moriarty—that such a being was a figment, a creation of the brain of Sherlock Holmes to put himself right with the world after a lamentable succession of failures. It is all excellent fooling in a field which well repays the ingenuity expended and even yet is not exhausted.

And so to real biography. The hundredth anniversary of the death of Samuel Taylor Coleridge has brought forth inevitably a goodly crop of appraisements and evaluations, and it is both natural and fitting that the new commentators should dwell more upon the merits than upon the failures of one of the most remarkable of Englishmen of letters, a man of contradictions truly, but even more unquestionably a man to whom no one can deny the proud possession of genius. 'He who could unweave the magic of *Kubla Khan*,' writes Dr. George McLean Harper in one of the most agreeable, if little critical, *Studies by Several Hands* in the centenary volume *Coleridge*, 'could make the sun and moon stand still.' Many in the intervening years since that magical music was first given to the world have endeavoured to unweave it for the benefit of students or in the exercise of their critical ingenuity; it remains a mystery and a joy for ever. And we are particularly glad that in

this volume is set out in full the much less known and exquisite *Inscription for a Fountain on a Heath*. This volume will assist to re-create in the public mind as great a master of melody as ever breathed, and, in addition, a generous-hearted, lovable man.

It is almost in the nature of a curiosity of experience to turn from this memorial volume to a new anthology, and in that to turn to the extract selected from Coleridge's works, eleven and a half pages from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Mr. Powley, editor of *The Laurel Bough*, expressly describes his anthology as excluding lyric and dramatic poetry. Were there ever any lines in English verse more lyrical than

‘A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.’

except those beginning ‘like one, that on a lonesome road,’ and others for ever famous in this same *Rime*? They will be found here, and by implication are not lyrical. But into what difficulties of selection has not the editor plunged? In his Introduction we find the following: ‘The sonnet has no firm claim to be regarded as lyrical. Peculiar canons of metrical and time construction limit the sonnet-writer’s art; in consequence, the form is always short and often “sings”’—which is really a *non sequitur* of a marked kind. This anthology has an interest in that it does contain in handy form a large number of poems and verses much less well known than they deserve to be; but the limitation that Mr. Powley has imposed upon his selection produces odd results, and the modern writers represented are unexpected both in the omissions and in the inclusions. Moreover, it is not clear at what audience the editor is aiming: the selections give the impression of being chosen for adults of experience, and the notes in the biographical index of being for the unlearned and uncritical young. For example, of Robert Bridges, ‘this poet showed a considerable interest in prosody’; of Shakespeare, ‘there is little doubt that the dark plays of his third period are his final claim to immortality’; Stephen Phillips, we are told, ‘sometimes equals Marlowe in strength’; Thomas Hardy is ‘a Prometheus (*sic*) of literature’; Keats ‘made of his experiences great art’; there is more in Kipling than jingoism; Chesterton’s ‘poem has value in an over-mechanized age’; and Burns ‘achieved greatness, particularly in short lyrics.’

The two volumes of modern verse which are on our list this month show at least the great variety that may come under the banner of that heading. It is, we hope, no disparagement of Lady Gerald Wellesley's gift to say that she is at her best in those lighter pieces about the inclusion of which she herself feels the most diffidence: she says that *Verses for the Middle-aged* have been included in this collection of *Poems of Ten Years, 1924-1934*, 'after some hesitation, because they represent the genuine beliefs or inventions of a young child, not the subsequent inventions of an adult.' That may be so, but 'the genuine beliefs or inventions of a young child' are always interesting and may often be poetic. For example, the following is entitled 'Sheep':

'How unconcerned the grazing sheep
Behaving in such manner;
They stand upon their breakfast, they
Lie down upon their dinner.

This would not seem so strange to us
If fish grew round our legs,
If we had floors of marmalade
And beds of buttered eggs.'

That seems to have the genuine ring, which is apt to elude the mature and the ambitious—but the inclusion of these juvenilia might be questioned as to date; they hardly belong to the ten years named.

Mr. Kendon has had the valour, even in these days when the past is nothing, the future little and the present everything to most writers, to return to an old theme and the skill to prove that in literature no theme is old. His publishers describe his poetry as being 'like a misted glass of water'—a description that is hardly just to his powers, for it suggests obscurity rather than freshness, and obscurity is a demerit from which he is conspicuously free: his verse has the simplicity and force of an original impress of mind striking boldly through to the conception. In places the prosody is a little rough, and he does not always avoid the sudden descent, but in the main the poem is justified of its ambition and gives a notable rendering to an ancient and lovely tale. Its appearance is one more encouraging proof of the high purpose of our youngest school—which, as all schools always have, is turning irresistibly from the disillusion and bitterness of that that has immediately preceded it back to the eternal fields of romance and beauty.

THE 'CORNHILL' COMPETITION.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 131.

THE Editor of the CORNHILL offers two prizes of books to the value of £1 from John Murray's catalogue, to the two solvers of the Literary Acrostic whose letters are opened first. Answers must be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, 50 Albemarle Street, W.1, and must contain the Coupon from page iii of the preliminary pages of this issue.

'State in ——— keep :

Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.'

1. 'To ——— the rivers tribute pay,
Down the high mountains sliding.'
2. 'My heart is wasted with my woe,
—————.'
3. 'Blown in the morning, thou shalt fade ere ———
What boots a life which in such haste forsakes thee ?'
4. 'Ay sung before the sapphire-colour'd throne
To him that sits ———.'
5. 'Stay! or ——— my joys will die
And perish in their infancy.'
6. 'Time shall not moult away his wings
Ere he shall ———.'

Answer to Acrostic 129, July number : 'And *flowers*, azure, black and *streak'd* with gold' (Shelley, 'The Question'). 1. *FindS* (Shelley, 'The Moon'). 2. *LeT* (Matthew Arnold, 'Requiescent'). 3. *OveR* (W. R. Rands, 'The Thought'). 4. *WakE* (Thomas Heywood, 'Matin Song'). 5. *EliaA* (Edmund Spenser, 'A Ditty'). 6. *RocK* (Wilfred Blunt, 'Gibraltar'). 7. *Stretch'D* (Thomas Gray, 'On a Favourite Cat').

The first correct answers opened were sent in by Miss A. Bayly, 68 Beaufort Road, Edgbaston, and M. Polglase, 'Rugen,' Alexandra Road, Penzance. These solvers are invited to choose books to the value of £1 from John Murray's catalogue.

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